

# TOMORROW

APRIL • 1949

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A NEW PROGRAM FOR  
AMERICAN EDUCATION

*Bernard Iddings Bell*

FROM DEADWOOD DICK TO  
SUPERMAN

*Richard B. Gehman*

OUR MODERN TROUBADOURS

*William A. Owens*

THE MAN OF LETTERS IN  
AMERICA

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Fiction • Poetry • Reviews



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love her son  
too much?**

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VOLUME EIGHT • NUMBER EIGHT

TOMORROW is published monthly by Garrett Publications, Inc., 11 East 44th St., New York 17, N. Y. Printed in the U.S.A. Editorial and advertising offices, 11 East 44th Street, New York 17, N. Y. Subscription rate: 12 issues, \$3.50 in U. S. and possessions and countries of the Pan-American Union; \$4.00 Canada; elsewhere \$4.50; two years \$6.00 U. S., single copies in the U. S. 35 cents. Vol. VIII, No. 8 for April, 1949. The cover and entire contents are copyright by Garrett Publications Inc., 1949, and cannot be reproduced without written permission. Copyright under International Copyright Convention. All rights reserved under the Pan-American Copyright Convention. TOMORROW cannot be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts nor can they be returned to sender unless accompanied by return postage. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.



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## Youth's Appeal for a United World

THE weakness of history is that it has to leave unheralded the glowing records of the humble and the individual acts of so many vital pioneers and benefactors of mankind. Thus, although the sum total of history is in large part the story of the unsung heroism of unknown individuals, the change and progress these men and women helped bring about are all too often unrecorded. As Emerson put it long ago, a great institution is but the lengthened shadow of an individual—and yet how careless we are in supporting and remembering these benefactors. It is well, therefore, to pause from time to time to pay tribute to such individuals and to rescue from obscurity their work in behalf of a better world.

In New York City today, there is a woman who has worked valiantly for the youth of all nations despite the crippling effect of her activities on her personal life and economic fortunes. Telling the world about the plight of young people in all lands in these days of unending political and economic upheavals demands courage and unwavering faith. Although the story of the needs of youth is not new, the fact remains that very much more will have to be revealed regarding their plight before they cease to be a major world problem.

One trembles at even the thought of the horrible conditions that prevail at this moment in the children's camps of Asia and Europe. These horrors continue partly because of our lack of interest in the problem; yet one day they will have to be noted and acted on so that the reawakened conscience of humanity must in the end prevail. The law of love and understanding which has been set aside to permit the grossest barbarities to take place throughout the world only served to quicken the imagination of Clara Leiser, that magnificent pioneer in the problems of world youth to whom I referred above. Love of youth, with intelligence, has permitted her to continue in her single-minded purpose to be, not only the productive, but also the practical link between the children of the old world and the new. In this her effort has been unique. Five years ago she singlehandedly organized Youth of All Nations, Inc., a non-profit, non-sectarian, non-political group to help young people all over the world, regardless of race, color or religion, understand each other through a carefully guided interchange of letters. This simple and yet profound idea has been so effective that Miss Leiser and her staff of unpaid volunteers are continually engaged in replying to letters from countries in every continent. These letters come from young men and women of strange and ancient civilizations who want to know about the new world—and they also come from students and others in streamlined high-school and college buildings all over the new world who want more direct, intimate and revealing contact with young people in distant lands.

MISS LEISER has continued this fight for all young people, never losing faith and never doubting that eventually many will come forward to help her answer all the questions which the youth of the world daily put to her. It is her hope to expand her organization and ultimately to establish a magazine of ideas to bring the youth of the world nearer to each other in understanding. The daily activity of this organization has already revealed hitherto unknown information about the deplorable conditions under which children must make their way. But the even greater contribution of this organization may be its efforts to give youth the opportunity it yearns for everywhere to blot out permanently the unhappy past and start building anew toward a happier future.

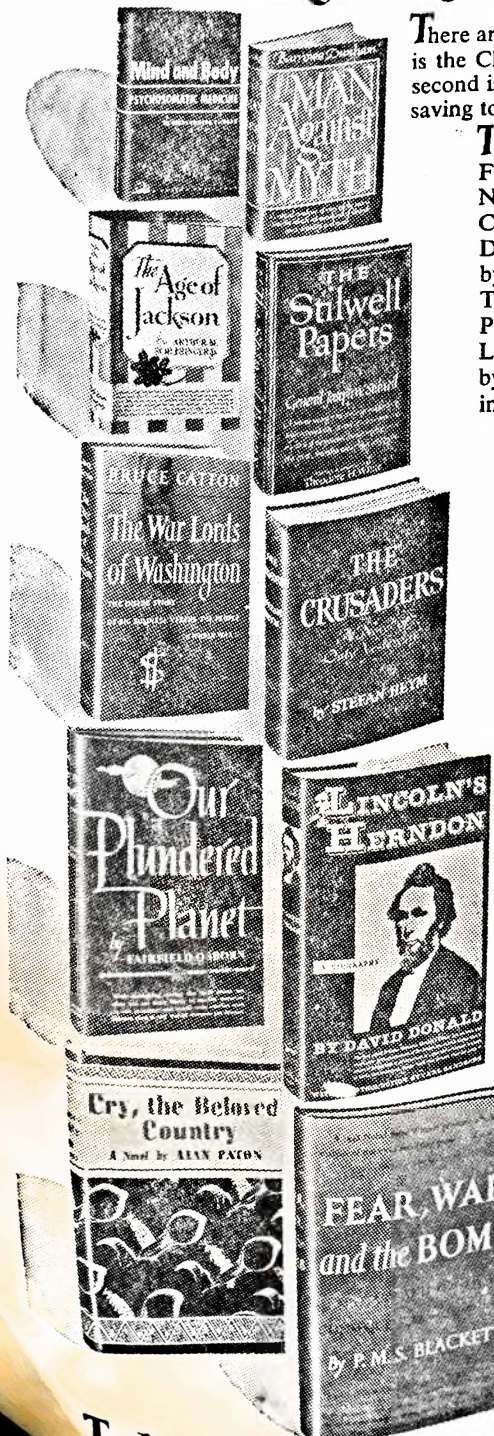
Recently another agency resettled 40,000 young men and women, all victims of Hitler's rise to power, in the agricultural communities of the little Republic of Israel, giving that new nation the nucleus of the youngest population in the world. That is an impressive example of what can be done for young people of every race and religion in every land, particularly in the vast and fertile expanses of the United States, Canada and South America—if the will and the organization are present. Clara Leiser's work has manifested this will and organization in a magnificent and moving degree. Perhaps her dream can be realized in the greatest republic of all. Whoever wishes to help Miss Leiser achieve her goal is invited to send contributions or requests for information to her at the following address: Youth of All Nations, 16 St. Luke's Place, New York 14, N. Y.

THE recent disappearance from American journalism of the New York *Star*, formerly known as *PM*, should be noted here. For although we disagreed with some things that this newspaper espoused or represented, we feel very strongly that there was ample place in New York and the other great cities of America for such a journal. A daily newspaper which considered it an integral part of its business, not only to present the news, but also to reveal the seamy side of life and to attempt to arouse public opinion to erase so many man-made evils, was indeed a striking phenomenon of the New York scene. The *Star* sought to remove the slavery and snobbery that all too often clothe the news; unfortunately, the very values it would have bestowed were those that in the end defeated this brave and sometimes noisy newspaper. Nevertheless, its passing will not be forgotten. It may well have left an effective imprint on New York's journalism which only the years will reveal. For it would be a sad commentary on our age if this great city did not demand a spur from time to time—an invitation to greater creative effort. We must not therefore permit the spirit of the *Star* and *PM* to perish. For we are poorer if we are not permitted that freedom of expression which the *Star* and *PM* attempted to convey in their brief existence.

Greene J. Sarnett



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T H E B O O K F I N D C L U B



# T O M O R R O W

VOL. VIII, NO. 8

APRIL 1949

"...EACH AGE IS A DREAM THAT IS DYING OR ONE THAT IS COMING TO BIRTH."

## ***A New Program for American Education***

BERNARD IDDINGS BELL

THERE is an immaturity inherent in American education that becomes increasingly evident as year follows year. This immaturity endangers the social structure and prevents a reasonable amount of happiness for Americans individually. It weakens and undermines the nation. The faults of American education, which are considerable, demand an immediate and thorough reformation of our school system. The citizenry must be wakened to the fact that they and their children are being provided with low-grade education which pretends to be first class.

Education is something which develops not *in vacuo* but in a society, in a culture in which the schools and colleges and universities are caught up. Sometimes observers of education do not remember this. They suppose that administrators and teachers can mold a civilization to their will. The opposite is far more true: that the desires of the citizens generally bring almost irresistible pressure on school people to train children—and adults—toward the fulfillment of those ends which are vulgarly esteemed valuable, to do little more than that. If the commonly valued ends are inadequate, if they are subhuman or worse, it is little the schools can do to save society. When the wise man sets out to restore, through the schools, life lived in terms of those human pursuits, he does well to realize that he can succeed only to a limited degree, that he can suc-

ceed at all only if he is willing to pay the price that society exacts from those who oppose the expectations of the customers: the taxpayers, the parents, the children themselves. It is hard to see how any improvement worth mentioning can come to our society as long as educators are wholly the obedient servants of the Common Man. But to some extent at least there can be some betterment of the American pattern through the agency of the schools. With no notion that by way of the simple and immediate reforms which I am about to suggest any radical improvement will come about, and yet with a feeling that something may be done, even though only in a small and preliminary way, I set down what seem to me a few things which deserve immediate attention.

The teaching profession must be organized more widely and more definitely than it now is, to see to it that the public is aroused, first of all, to insist on adequate financial support of education and, secondly, to resist all political control, all attempts to transform the schools, colleges and universities into agencies for the spreading of government-devised propaganda.

At present we spend a pitiable amount on education, less than 1 per cent of the national income. One per cent more is spent by our people for reading matter: books, magazines, newspapers, which may be regarded by the optimis-

BERNARD IDDINGS BELL's articles on religion and education appear frequently in the nation's leading magazines. A university and cathedral preacher in America, England and Canada, Dr. Bell is at present consultant on education to the Episcopal Bishop of Chicago. His latest book, *Crisis in Education*, which will include this article, will be published by Whittlesey House in the spring.

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tic as money used for education. Add the two items together, and we get, at the very outside, 2 per cent of the national income expended on things of the mind plus academic training. We spend far more on luxuries. A survey made in 1941 showed that the average family had then an income of \$1,905. The average family expenditure for automobiles was \$171; for recreation, \$69; for tobacco, \$35; for reading material \$16; for education, \$15. Professor S. E. Harris, who cites these figures in his book, *How Shall We Pay for Education?* sensibly concludes that "in the light of large increases in luxury expenditures generally and the small rise in expenditures for education over these years, it is difficult to take at its face value the statement frequently made that Americans cannot afford to pay more for education."

They can pay more, but they will pay more only when it is taxed out of them. It is a curious characteristic of the usual contemporary American that voluntarily he will contribute little or nothing toward the support of social services: for health, for safety, for education; that he prefers to waste his substance not in riotous living but in fripperies and amusements; this he assumes, because he has been taught that government will provide and pay for the social services. To that extent almost all our people, including some of the most Tory Republicans, are Socialists. Governments politically chosen and seeking re-election usually give to the social services according to the intensity of popular pressures, not according to surveyed need. If education is to get the money it must have (or else continue to be the anemic thing it is), the educators must shout long and lustily and get as many other people as possible, especially parents, to shout with them long and lustily until their voices are heard in every town meeting, city or county council, state legislature, the Congress in Washington.

But, at the very same time that it cries for money enough to do its important job, the profession, again with the secured backing of enlightened parents, must resist firmly all attempts on the part of political persons and boards to control its policies and personnel. Otherwise, education will soon become only an agency for the entrenchment in privilege of whatever class happens to dominate the state.

The natural instrument for this dual insistence would seem to be the National Education Association, which as yet, if one considers its possibilities, has scarcely begun to function. One of the first things it should demand is the setting up of a national department of education within the government, its head a member of the Cabinet and a person as agreeable to the N.E.A. as the Secretary of Labor must be to organized labor. Its lesser officers should without exception be put under civil service. With such a department as this, the N.E.A. could do business effectively, not only for the good of teachers but for the common good. Similar departments could be created—and would be if the teachers insisted upon it—in every state and county and city and village and hamlet; and the unit of the N.E.A. in these vicinities, working in close cooperation

with the national office of the N.E.A., could effectively keep crying up and down the land the twofold demand, "More money from taxation for education!" and "Keep political controls out of the schools!" Thus to insist upon support and freedom, both at the same time, will sound like heresy to the usual American statesman; but for all that, the thing is a necessity, quite as much a necessity in the United States as in Great Britain, where the battle for support and freedom at the same time has largely been won.

**W**E need to recognize that there is an inexcusable waste of student time involved in our system of schooling as now organized. Formal education takes entirely too long.

The waste injures, first of all, those who are going on to the professions: medicine, the law, business administration, diplomacy and consular service, education, forestry, agriculture, research in science, and the rest. Consider for example the young American of today who desires to become a medical doctor. After leaving high school at eighteen years of age, he must go four years to college, then four years to a medical school (if it is a good one), then two years to an internship. By the time he is through with all this and ready to begin work, he is twenty-eight years old. Then—and probably not until then—he can get busy, settle down, marry. About the same amount of time is required in the law and should be required in the other professions.

The waste also hurts those who are going into business, industry, finance. These should have, and the best of them demand, four years in college, after which they must get jobs and learn how to handle themselves in terms of their jobs. This takes four or five years more. They too are well on toward thirty before they can function competently. Even young men and women who desire to learn a trade, if they are to have anything of a general education, are in their twenties before they are ready for apprenticeship.

This is obviously too long a time to spend on education apart from self-support and self-expression; and it is unduly extravagant for the country as a whole to support out of labor so many people for so many years. In consequence, the tendency has been to telescope the college and technical or professional training, with resulting restriction in the amount and adequacy of general education for citizenship and for a rich and rational enjoyment of living. When we bemoan the too-utilitarian nature of our colleges and to some extent of our high schools, we might have grace to remember that this is largely forced on them by sheer pressure to get the students out and about their business at a reasonable age. If we are to have both general education and vocational training—and obviously we need them both—we must avoid all possible waste and duplication from the beginning to the end of our system.

Most observers are sure that the major waste is in the elementary schools and high schools. How to remedy this

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## A NEW PROGRAM FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION

will require a great deal of study on the part of experts who are not hindered by the inertia of things as they are. It would even now seem possible and worth while to divide our schools somewhat differently from the way they are traditionally divided in the United States. The usual method is:

a) Eight years of grammar school, ages six through fourteen.

b) Four years of high school, ages fifteen through eighteen.

c) Four years of college, ages nineteen through twenty-two.

d) Three or four years of professional training, ages twenty-three through twenty-five or twenty-six.

Instead of this it is suggested that we set up:

a) Six years of grammar school, ages six through twelve.

b) Four years of intermediate school, ages thirteen through sixteen.

c) Three years of college, ages seventeen through nineteen.

d) Four years of professional- and technical-school training, ages twenty through twenty-three.

The saving would be somewhere around three years.

*The new grammar school* should be required to teach in six years all that the grammar school now takes eight years to give. No other nation encourages its teachers and pupils to fool around the way ours do "in the grades."

*The four-year intermediate school* (call it "high school" if you will, but the term has gained an aroma of undisciplined adolescence, of ridiculous pretension to school prematurity, which makes it an unfortunate name for anything that wishes to be regarded as a real school) should complete the training, begun lower down, in the skills necessary for reading, writing, arithmetic, accuracy in sensory observation; should enable pupils to go on into algebra, geometry, history, the study of nature; should expose them to contact with the best in arts and letters.

*At the end of the intermediate school, at about sixteen, those who cannot or will not profit further by intellectual disciplines should be directed into special schools which can develop them on manual lines plus civilize them by more, but very much simplified, study of literature, of history, of scientific principles and techniques.*

*The rest of the pupils should go on through the college for three years, years devoted to dialectical and humanistic studies plus first steps in acquiring the techniques (laboratory and otherwise) which will be used in later professional training. Even if these techniques are never used in the years to come, they are worth while because they have distinct disciplinary value.*

Then *the professional or technical schools* should take over for four years.

About three years would be saved by the redistribution suggested; two in grammar school and one later on. Equally important, *everyone who has the ability could afford time to get both general and vocational education.*

The present scandalous (one is tempted to say "criminal" and would except that the fault is caused by incompetence rather than malice) throwing away of precious time and cultivation of lazy habits of thought and action would exist no more.

A radical redistribution of school time—this or some other—is imperative, and quickly.

**W**E must make it possible for highly competent students of low income or from low-income families to go on with their education through high school, college, graduate or professional school at public expense, and this without expectation that they take time off from their studies to support or partially support themselves by gainful employment.

In this respect England is more realistic, at least above the secondary-school level, more "democratic," than we in the United States. For years England has had a system of county scholarships (the counties more or less correspond to our states). Anyone about to be graduated from a secondary school may take the carefully devised examination for a scholarship. If he shows considerable intellectual promise, he receives an annual grant sufficient to cover, at the university or professional school of his choice, all fees, lodging and board expenses, clothing, even a reasonable amount of fun. He gets a lump sum ranging from about a thousand to sixteen hundred dollars or so a year and can spend it as he desires. The only requirement is that he shall continue to do first-rate work in his university or other higher school.

"Do you expect the recipients of these sums to repay them later on?" I asked an examiner for Hampshire.

"Of course not," he replied. "The grants are an investment for the nation's future leadership and effectiveness."

"And how many scholarships are awarded annually?"

"As many as there are young men and women who can show us that they have the necessary brains."

Oxford and Cambridge are commonly regarded in America as attended by the sons and daughters either of the nobility or of the economically privileged; as a matter of fact, a large proportion of those studying on the Cam and the "Char" are poor men's children, supported by county scholarships. The same is true of the younger universities.

Of late Great Britain has come to recognize more and more that a similar arrangement ought to be made for bright but poor children in secondary school: that there should be grants sufficient to pay, when needed, a child's share of family living expenses as well as his fees, so that he may go on with his studies and give his whole time to them.

We are not yet so wise. Often our state or municipal universities do, it is true, provide free or nearly free tuition, and almost all our secondary schools are of the free-tuition type; but tuition fees are a small part of the cost of education to pupils and their families. We still handi-



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cap the poor man's sons and daughters. It is conservatively estimated that going on beyond the high school is financially possible only for one in three really bright children of parents whose family income is less than twenty-five hundred dollars; for one in two whose family income is between three and five thousand dollars; for one in one whose family income is over seven thousand dollars. They do not all go, of course, from the higher income group, but it can be wangled when desired.

Moreover, those who matriculate in higher education are often forced to drop out for financial reasons. Just before the war this was true of 12 per cent of students who entered our colleges. It is also true that many high-school students, often the brighter ones, must leave school because their parents cannot afford to keep them longer from gainful labors. Such cases are most frequent in states where wages are low but in which, thanks to the oneness of our national setup, the cost of living mounts at a rate almost equal to that in more affluent commonwealths.

Even when bright students do not have to drop out of high school and college, frequently they are forced to support or partly to support themselves while studying by all sorts of time-wasting and energy-consuming part-time labor; waiting on table, stoking furnaces, baby sitting, taxi driving, all kinds of jobs. So general is this practice that Americans have rationalized it and find, or pretend to find, great virtue in the business. As a matter of fact, it is at least 90 per cent vicious. Study in high school or beyond ought to demand full-time effort; if it does not, the standards need to be raised. The strain of self-support while studying is often inhuman. I know a graduate law student, for instance, in one of our foremost universities who, last year, in order to make both ends meet, worked seven hours a night, seven nights a week, at a hotel desk. The double duty—this and his studies—broke his health, and he had to quit the university for a year in order to recover his nervous equilibrium. His is a not unheard-of case. Even those who do not break under strain often do inferior work and frequently injure their health so that they pay heavily later on, all their lives, with nervous indigestion or worse. Such nonsense is not only wasteful of brain power; it is a handicap to the leadership of tomorrow.

We should, as a matter of investment for the public welfare, adequately support men and women who show evidence of superior brain power. Only thus can we really equalize and democratize educational opportunity.

How high a standard of intelligence is it profitable to subsidize publicly? Professor Ralph W. Tyler of the University of Chicago thinks we should certainly look after at least the top 1 per cent, since from them will come the persons most capable of productive and creative research. This is not enough. Excellent work is done, indispensable work, by those who are not supergeniuses. The British way is good: fix no percentage and do not rely entirely on intelligence quotients; whenever

a boy comes along who by examination shows high promise of achievement and who has need, provide him with money enough to cover tuition and upkeep on a modest but decent level; see to it that he continues to enjoy this assistance as long as he continues to do first-rate work; see to it also that public money is not wasted on the higher education of those who are mediocre or worse. Refuse to finance those who are not competent, forbid students to "work their way through," adequately provide for those who are able scholastically, and the standards of achievement will rise overnight.

Forbid by law the assigning at any stage of schooling of more than twenty-five pupils to a teacher. It is impossible really to teach more pupils than that. This is an



entirely proper demand made by the better educational associations. But if we satisfy it we must have, for the same number of pupils as at present, at least 25 per cent more teachers than now. Where do we get them? Whence do we pay them?

We must enlist, train and sustain more teachers, and much more able teachers than we now have, and this at every level. The teaching profession is demanding more pay. Of the justice of this insistence, more in a moment or two. First let us ask if the teachers that we have at present, taking them by and large, are worth more than we pay them. The answer is that for the most part they are not. Many of them have not had an education, either general or professional, sufficient for effective teaching. Dorothy Thompson wrote in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1947:

"The average four-year college course given in American colleges and universities does not encompass an impressive amount of 'higher' education, measured by, say, British standards. But only fifteen American states out of the forty-eight require a college degree for teachers; and more than half of all the teachers in the country have none. Over 6 per cent of American public-school teachers have had no training beyond high school; 35 per cent have had less than two years of post-high-school training; and over 14 per cent hold substandard certificates, indicating incapacity to meet even the minimum requirements of their states . . . and it is certainly no sign of progress that the average American teacher today has less college education than the average of five years ago."



EVEN when we recognize these low-qualification standards, however, almost any unprejudiced observer will admit that our teachers are not paid enough to live on. They were underpaid before the war; they are worse underpaid today. Between 1939 and 1948 the general cost of living rose about 55 per cent; the pay of teachers, in spite of an estimated increase of \$350 million in 1947-48 over 1946-47, has gone up only about 25 per cent. Stipends will have to be raised at least a further billion dollars if we are to establish a wage for teachers of from \$2500 to \$6000 a year, a reasonable and not extravagant remuneration.

The low pay now prevailing is the largest factor in preventing the enlistment of the proper kind of women in teaching, and it prevents most men from even thinking of teaching except in university positions; it also hinders the continuance of qualified persons in the profession. But there are other deterrents besides low pay.

There is also insecurity of tenure. In most parts of the country teachers in grammar schools and high schools are "hired" year by year, their competence judged and sentence rendered annually by local school boards made up for the most part of popularly elected persons inexperienced in pedagogy and subject to political pressure and to even less reputable forms of social prejudice. Even in higher education there is insecurity for those under the rank of associate professor, which means for the greater part of every college staff.

Another hindrance to our getting enough competent teachers is the common feeling that teaching is not a profession of dignity, not a learned profession, only a sort of hack trade which receives little public honor, honor such as might help make the low pay endurable.

There is also the irksome difficulty, widely known, of a teacher's having to deal with undisciplined children. A schoolmistress whom I knew to be experienced and able, living in the Far West, a master of arts from a good university, once wrote me that at the age of thirty-five, after ten years' service in a public junior high school, she had abandoned the profession and taken a position selling blouses for a jobbing firm. I protested at the change and asked if she were doing it in the hope of more money. She replied, "Not at all. I lost my pension rights; besides, I am not sure I shall make more in the new work. The truth is that I could not stick it any longer. I could not face the thought of being insulted for another year, day after day, by a pack of impudent and unlicked cubs of fourteen or so, the males crude enough and the females worse, whose homes did not discipline them, discipline of whom was on principle ignored by the very 'progressive' and in my opinion wholly unrealistic school authorities, and whom I was forbidden by law to punish in any way myself. Life is too short and self-respect is too strong for me to go on."

I told this to a teacher in a school in the Bronx, one of the best esteemed teachers in the New York City school system. "Of course," she said. "Your acquaintance is

quite right about it. The same thing is true in New York City. A woman must have the hide of a rhinoceros to teach in the public schools in our metropolis. It is a rare day that I am not insulted by some of the little beasts, cursed at, shoved and jostled, called a vile name or two. If I let myself notice, I should have to follow your friend's example. I have learned to ignore it."

In parts of the country that are more civilized than the monster cities, in smaller communities where the home has not collapsed, in places where administrators try to deal with real children instead of with the little angels imagined by a good many professors of education, teachers are not quite so trampled on by their charges; but, speaking generally, "the teacher's lot is not a happy one," and gentlemen and gentlewomen think twice before they contemplate teaching, and often do not think twice about abandoning it later on for other vocations.

Coupled with this resentment against undiscipline, teachers often feel an irritation at being ordered about by theorists from schools of education who are put into posts of authority over them and who, though they have had small teaching experience themselves, continually want to change procedures to fit new ideas thought up in a study somewhere. Teachers think that before pedagogic changes are made, particularly changes which involve radical adjustment of philosophical approach, they who do the instructing should be consulted and persuaded and convinced of the necessity and wisdom thereof; that reforms should come not from the top down but from the bottom up. They are weary of change and rechange. They see their pupils regarded not as growing human beings but as guinea pigs for experimentation and themselves as unwilling laboratory technicians. Inner revolt drives thousands out of teaching every year and prevents other thousands from preparing for it, and these frequently the cream of the crop. Most teachers realize the facts of the case, but it is usually considered impolitic to say anything about them in public unless one first gets out of teaching. This curious silence, akin to that of all social servants in a technocratic and totalitarian society, is good evidence of "the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday."

To sum up, if we wish teachers in proper numbers and of the right sort, we should:

a) Pay them from \$2500 to \$6000 a year and give them assurance of tenure unless incompetence can be proved, and proper pensions on retirement after service. (How much pension? A coal miner is given \$100 a month retirement allowance; a teacher would seem to be worth at least that much.)

b) Raise the academic requirements for teachers as rapidly as possible so that teaching becomes a reputable profession. If pedagogues are paid a living wage, the public may thus be made at least a little more sure that it gets its money's worth. How fast should standards be raised? At least this much: that by 1953 it will be true that no one will be licensed to teach, in any school in the land, who has not had two years general education beyond the

high school plus one year's training in the theory and practice of education; that by 1958 no one will be licensed to teach in any school who has not had three years of general education beyond the high school plus one full year in professional subjects; that by 1960 no one will be licensed to teach in a secondary school who has not the master of arts degree, with at least one of the five years beyond the high school that are required for that degree devoted to a study of pedagogy. These would seem to be an almost irreducible minimum of requirement—that is, if we are to stop playing around with education in the United States.

c) Subsidize secondary-school and college students who show potential competence for teaching so that they may prepare themselves for it. Give them, if they have need, an annual allowance of at least \$1000 from the public funds, to be used toward tuition and support in reputable places of training, with a requirement that if they do not enter the profession or leave it voluntarily after less than five years' service they shall pay back all sums advanced to them at the rate of \$200 a year. It is far better to subsidize students than to subsidize schools. Subsidized schools are subject to political pressures; subsidized students are not so easily pliable.

d) Require that no one be given supervisory authority over teachers who has had less than five years of actual teaching experience.

e) Restore to the schools a discipline sufficiently effective to protect teachers from insult and intimidation at the hands of their pupils.



We need to combat the notion that the only attitude toward God which is legitimate in a tax-supported school is the attitude that ignores God as though He does not exist or, if He does exist, does not matter.

It is, of course, proper that atheists should be able to send their children to atheistic schools if they so desire; but it is hard to see why atheists, few in number as they are, should be allowed to force atheistic-by-negation education on the children of the great majority of us who do pay at least theoretical attention to the Deity. As the American school system is now more and more conducted, there is no such thing as religious liberty in American education. There is liberty only to be unreligious. If constitutionally the public schools must "leave religion out," then the only decent thing is to permit religious

groups to run their own schools, which, of course, we may do, and to give them tax money to run them with, which we do not. Such a step would not in the least violate the principle, embodied in the Constitution, that there shall be no established church in the United States. No one wishes to set up an exclusive *ecclesia*.

If it be contended that multiple school systems divide the body politic, which to some extent they do, then in reply it may be pointed out that the only way to retain complete unity, and at the same time enable those who desire that their children should recognize God to have that privilege, is to see to it that time is given in the public schools to a common examination by the growing children of what are the basic religious and moral ideas, all this taught objectively and with no desire to bring about conviction (which is the province of the church and the home), and also to furnish opportunity in school hours for the various current faiths in a community to teach their own children what they themselves believe.

THE schools should refuse to assume burdens properly parental; they have quite enough to do without that. If the American parent is incompetent to look after the physical, social and ethical upbringing of his or her children, which is certainly true of many parents, possibly true of most of them, then those who have the national welfare at heart, instead of piling impossible burdens on the schools, had better make homemaking and home education itself a basic part of schooling from six years of age onward and had better go in dead earnest at the education of parents who already are parents.

Adult education generally is grossly neglected among us, though happily less so with each passing year. The time never comes when a human being can justly be called an "educated person." The world is not divided into the educated and the uneducated, but rather into the educable and the uneducable. If a man were really to come to the place that he was educated, that is to say, if he were to come to the end of growing apprehension and understanding, all that could rightly be done to that man would be to dig a hole and bury him. Happily few reach such a sad estate. The educable process should be actively helped for men and women of all ages from babyhood to death.

Nor should it be regarded as enough to assist adults to improve their technical skills and so increase their incomes. There is real hunger for general knowledge, liberal knowledge, among adult persons: witness the introduction of courses in political theory for farmers in Kansas, under the joint direction of the Farm Bureau and the Institute of Citizenship at Kansas State College; witness the great success of the Peoples' High Schools in Denmark, which do *not* teach technology but devote themselves to the teaching of history, bases of Danish culture, the literature of the country, the principles of political and social organization, which admit no pupil under eighteen years of age and none who is not engaged in industry or agri-



culture; witness the wide spread of the "great-books movement"; witness the growth of lecture courses, women's clubs, town halls. There are many things which cannot be studied to much advantage or otherwise than in an atmosphere of artificiality except by people who are grown-up and at work: political science, for instance, or how to handle loneliness and frustration. A community ought to be thoroughly ashamed of itself which does not devote as much thought, time, money, to the education of adults over twenty as it provides for the nurture of children under twenty.

Thought needs to be given to what may be done in respect to teaching morals and manners.

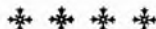
The chief difficulty here is that our American civilization has no agreed-upon ethical standards, standards which can be assumed and taught to the oncoming generation as a matter of course. We are a people with no common world view, no generally accepted definition of the nature and purpose of man. Such being the case, it becomes a necessity for each school or college to determine the sort of moral theory to which it intends to commit itself, together with the brand of good manners which it will derive from that theory. If this is not done, the result will be the turning out of amoral graduates and unmannered boors. The ethical commitments of a college or school should be made clear to those who teach, to those who learn, to those to whom appeal is made for pupils and support.

To whom or to what is a man responsible for his behavior? Is it only to himself? In spite of the dictum of Polonius, to be true to oneself does not necessarily result in being false to no other man, not unless the self to which one is true is a self devoted to more than one self. Otherwise for people to be true each to himself or herself is more apt to result in anarchy than in an ordered way of life. Is one to be responsible, for what one is and does, only to the will of majorities? This results in a conformist mediocrity. Is one to look to the total social group for standards of behavior, for sanctions? The end of this is a totalitarian setup manipulated by the ruthless and unscrupulous, a negation of just opportunity for freedom of expression and for voluntary self-investment. Is man's responsibility to mere tradition? This is deadly to creative and critical thinking, without which no society can long

survive. Is it to negation of tradition? This way lies a deal of precious nonsense and precocity. Is human responsibility to that which is beyond man? If so, religion is involved, primarily involved, inescapably involved.

We need a deeply concerned consideration of the basis of right conduct and decent manners, a consideration carried on not merely on the level of high philosophy but also on the pedagogic level of how to train for character and social cooperation. We need this immediately, demandingly; but our professors of education, our administrators, our teachers, are usually little concerned with inquiry about purpose—purpose in politics, purpose in labors, purpose in living, purpose in anything including purpose in education itself. Their neglect is almost too absurd to be imagined; yet it is a fact. It is obviously ridiculous to try to develop growing human beings without asking what man is to aim at and why. We might well have a moratorium on discussion of methods and organization of education until we come to some decision about the rightful ends of education.

Ideally such a decision should be reached by society as a whole and govern our education as a matter of course; but in a confused state of social disruption like ours in this mid-twentieth century, general agreement about purpose is next to impossible. In this lies national peril; we have no agreed-upon ethical ideology; there is nothing commonly held as imperative to be promoted or defended, nothing which compels the glad devotion of lives and fortunes unless we get returns in profits and praise. It will be a long time, possibly a fatally long time, before we again have a national morality unless it be a totalitarian and secularistic morality, which God forbid. Meanwhile, each school or college or university is forced to define its own concept of the good life and then strive to impart it, unless that school or college or university is content, as most are in the United States today, to deal only with secondary matters while the commonwealth drifts toward dissolution. We might at least be informing our students about what the various ethical alternatives are. *Make moral philosophy once more the central consideration in education.* Of all the steps suggested or implied for the salvation of teaching and learning, this is both the most immediately required and the most difficult.



## From Deadwood Dick to Superman

RICHARD B. GEHMAN

IF I like to read," a New York editor wrote recently, "it is because when I was about eight or nine years old I began reading books such as the old Pluck and Luck series, the Liberty Boys of '76, Frank Merriwell and others, passing along gradually to a higher level with the Rover Boys and Tom Swift, until I finally got to the stage where I could read the *New Republic* without a dictionary."

This gentleman's case parallels that of hundreds of thousands of other American adults. There scarcely exists today a literate person who did not get his first taste of reading from what scholars call subliterate material: the penny dreadfuls, the imported English bloods, the dime and half-dime novel libraries, and finally the series books. Virtually everyone over twenty-five can recall, and in most cases recount the adventures of, such fictional stalwarts as Buffalo Bill, Jesse James, Jr., Rough Rider, Frank Reade, Jr., the two Dicks (Ragged and Deadwood), Nick Carter, Old Cap Collier, Bowery Billy, Elsie Dinsmore, Tom Slade, Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue, the Bobbsey Twins, Dave Darrin, Pee Wee Harris and innumerable others. Similarly, while even the most avid circulating-library fan of today might be hard pressed to recall the author of such a recent best-seller as *The Foxes of Harrow*, such literary figures as Captain Frederick Whittaker, Ned Buntline, Horatio Alger, G. A. Henty, John Conway (Private Detective), Burt L. Standish, Harry Castlemon, Edward Stratemeyer, Victor Appleton, Laura Lee Hope, Martha Finley and Frank V. Webster were once lares and penates in most American homes, at least among the juvenile members of the family.

The era of the dime novels and the series books, which might be termed the First Age of Trash, lasted from 1860 to a date which students place roughly around 1925. Only a few of the old favorites survive today. Grosset and Dunlap's *Bobbsey Twins*, of which there are now forty-one titles in print, grows by one new volume each year. A throwback can be seen in the case of the army wife Janet Lambert, whose contemporary stories about army brats, published by Dutton, have achieved wide acceptance. But for the most part, the dime novels and the

series books at first spawned only illegitimate offspring—such pulps as *The Shadow* and *Doc Savage*. Their important descendants did not begin to appear until around 1938, when *Superman*, in comic book form, marked the beginning of the Second Age of Trash.

There can be no question that childhood reading helps to mold the mature mind. Trash in general appeals mainly to youth, but there has never been a definitive study of the over-all psychological effects of subliterate material upon its consumers. For this reason it is interesting to make a preliminary survey of the dime novels and series books which were popular for more than sixty years, and to compare them with the diet of juvenile bookworms of today.

The patterns in the early dime novels were as unvarying as herringbones in cheap tweed. Each one began either with the report of a gun, after which three or more redskins bit the dust, or with a lush paragraph which set the stage, such as this:

The bright hot summer on the plains had gone, followed by its next brilliant-hued neighbor, autumn, and winter had spread her mantle over the prairies and mountains of the Far West—showered her feathery flakes down so copiously that the wilderness was, as it were, impassable except with the aid of snow-shoes.

This is, as it were, the beginning of *Gold Rifle, the Sharp-Shooter; or, The Boy Detective of the Black Ranch*, by Edward L. Wheeler, an "authority" on the Far West and one of the most popular authors of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Unless the records are incorrect, Mr. Wheeler never went beyond his home town, Jersey City, but this didn't prevent him from creating at least a hundred romances of the frontier days. He was the father of Deadwood Dick and Deadwood Dick, Jr. and the mainstay of the *Deadwood Dick Library*, published by M. J. Ivers, of which *Gold Rifle* was No. 14.

After warming up with a few paragraphs equal in richness to the one quoted above, Mr. Wheeler begins with a turkey shoot in a frontier settlement. Jay Toleman, "reckless, ruffianly and revengeful," and "disgusting to those he came in contact with," has just arrogantly killed

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all but one of the turkeys and is about to try for the biggest and best bird, which, according to a bystander, "has been put up at five shoots, but nevyer got hit yet. He bears a charmed life, an' is two years old." Toleman shoots and misses and, bully that he is, behaves badly about it. Meanwhile, a stranger has come up and is "casually surveying the crowd, and the prize gobbler." This, we sense, is the hero; and the author describes him as follows:

About twenty years had passed over his head, but these years had been busied in perfecting and developing what was now a handsome form, stout, pliable, and athletic, capable of great celerity, strength and endurance.

The stranger carries a gold-plated Remington repeating rifle, and "the sight at the muzzle of the barrel," writes Mr. Wheeler breathlessly, "was set with a flashing diamond!" Upon being invited to shoot, Gold Rifle claims that he can stand on his head and knock the bird's head off, whereupon Jay Toleman bets him fifty dollars that he can't. Gold Rifle never hesitates:

A large, wide piece of board was packed down upon the snow, and upon this Gold Rifle took his position . . . After glancing at the dimly discernible gobbler, he knelt upon the board and raised his body into the air, and in a moment was perfectly balanced on his head, his feet erect in mid-air, his hands free. The rifle was handed him, and in a moment he had sighted it, fired, and somersaulted back upon his feet, while wild and loud rung the huzzas when it was seen that the bullet had dropped the King Gobbler!

Shortly after this, a trio of settlement blackguards, including Jacob Toleman (father of the bested ruffian), Omerhaun, and the desperate Boover Legree, get together and persuade themselves and a group of soldiers that Gold Rifle is none but Tiger Track, the notorious outlaw. They put him to flight, but although they shoot his mustang from under him he proceeds on foot at an equal rate of speed. In a valley he encounters an eccentric Yankee, Josh Hemperhill, who leads him to the near-by home of General Maynard, where he meets beautiful May, the general's daughter. They help him escape. Later, Josh, spurned by May, leaves the general's place and is captured by Indians led by Sitting Bull. He is rescued almost immediately by—it is almost unnecessary to say it—Gold Rifle, who then pulls aside a strip of mink trimming on his buckskin suit and reveals a solid gold badge on which is inscribed, "U. S. GOVERNMENT TO C. A. WAGNER, in Recognition of Faithful Service as a Detective Spy." Gold Rifle, or "Kit" Wagner, or Deronda (his names often make it difficult to keep track of him) is later captured by outlaws and thrown into a pit containing a number of dead men; stumbles upon a counterfeiting ring; escapes with his mother, who also had been caught by the gang, on skates and sled across a frozen lake; has another encounter with the redskins; gets in the way of an avalanche, and . . .

In the end, of course, Gold Rifle and the good guys round up Tiger Track and the bad guys, and Tiger Track

is unmasked, as the canny Detective Spy has known all along, as none but that sharp-shooting blackguard, Jay Toleman. There follows, somewhat anti-climactically, that taking off of false beard, unraveling of parentage and disclosure of true identity which stamps the Wild West story as authentic. Gold Rifle and the lovely May are first engaged and ultimately married, and in the final sentence we learn that faithful old Josh Hemperhill, the Yankee eccentric, is still living with them as a family retainer.

Although this plot, with imperceptible variations, was the tried-and-trusted die for the machine-stamped wild-west



story, the very first dime novel was quite different. It was called *Malaeska: the Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, and was written in 1860 by a respected lady editor and novelist, Ann Sophia Winterbotham Stephens. Prior to this, Col. Edward Zane Carroll Judson (Ned Buntline) had published a weekly blood-and-thunder story-paper of his own called, appropriately enough, *Ned Buntline's Own*. But *Malaeska* was the first compact, salmon-colored paperback issued by the firm established by Erastus Flavel Beadle, the man who deserves the uneasy distinction of initiating mass publication in this country.

In 1859, Beadle and his brother, Irwin, had founded a publishing firm devoted to producing song books, joke books, letter-writers, game books and books of etiquette. (Not all their products were trash; they were the first to



publish Mark Twain's *Celebrated Jumping Frog*.) The success of the little books must have prompted them to risk printing *Malaeska*, which turned out to be no risk at all. It wasn't in print two weeks before it was acknowledged a hit. The dam broke.

For the next thirty years, Beadle's headquarters at 98 William Street in New York poured forth hundreds of titles in the *Pocket Novel* series, the *Boys' Library of Sport*, the *Story and Adventure* series, the *New Dime Novels*, the *American Tales*, and *Frank Starr's American Novels* (Starr was Beadle's composing-room foreman; the address listed for his series was Beadle's back door, which opened on another street). The firm later became Beadle and Adams, and in 1862 they opened a London branch for the purpose of reprinting their wares. The books caught on in England and the Continent; they made such a profound impression upon the French, in fact, that it was not uncommon in the 1880's for a Frenchman to arrive in this country armed to the teeth, ready to do battle with the Indians he thought would be waiting to attack him as he stepped off the boat.

The western heroes had been presented in prose which, despite its strong vein of pure action, often approached the purple. The creators of Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack took pleasure in pausing to describe the weather, the scenery, or the physical features of their characters (although women usually were accorded only the adjective "beautiful," and mentioned only in terms of silken hair and small feet). With the coming of such detectives as Old Cap Collier, Old Sleuth and Nick Carter, the purple began to fade. Sets and physical description gave way to unadulterated action. If the westerns had contained enough action in each novel to make four or five Gene Autry pictures, the detective stories held enough to make a baker's dozen of Monogram thrillers.

Acting in the spirit of scientific inquiry, Edmund Pearson, the famous criminologist, once tabulated as a hobby the feats of a single detective in a single novel (in *Dime Novels: or Following an old Trail in Popular Literature*, Little, Brown, 1929). The hero was Old Cap Collier; the book, *'Piping' the New Haven Mystery*, probably the first popular detective novel. The facts in this story, incidentally, were said to have been adapted from an actual murder case, but the identity of the actual adapter was cloaked in the pseudonym W. I. James. According to Pearson's count, Old Cap Collier: gets into a fight (plain) five times; fights four or five men at once, seven times; is shot at or attacked with knives or bludgeons, twelve times; is blown up, escapes poisoning, is buried alive, is caught in a steel trap disguised as a chair, one time each; beats two men "to a jelly"; hurls twenty-one men through the air, one to a distance of thirty feet; and assumes these disguises: a fat Dutchman, an elderly man with gray hair, a countryman, a tramp, a sandwich-man, a cabinman, a cavalier at a masked ball, an oysterman, an oysterman further disguised by false whiskers and a wig, a "man seen in the woods," an elderly broker, a country

merchant, a middle-aged peddler, an organ grinder, a ship's captain, a rough, and two others mentioned but not described specifically.

Old Cap's method of disposing of his enemies was highly effective. Early in the New Haven mystery, while sitting on a park bench disguised as the fat old Dutchman, he is approached by two toughs who decide to get rid of him so that they can conduct their nefarious negotiations in peace. After telling the Dutchman that "his room is better than his company," and getting no reply, one of the villains says:

"We'll have to punch old sauerkraut's head."

No sooner had the remark been made than the fat Dutchman arose and seized the two men by their coat collars, one with either hand.

They were both powerful men, but with a strength that was wonderful, the Dutchman pulled them close together in spite of their struggles, held them at arm's length and commenced beating their heads together.

This he did seven times, and then, as he gave them three more raps, each causing them to see stars, he uttered the words which appeared at the head of this chapter:

"Acht, neun, zehn—weg sie gehen."

As he said "Away you go," the Dutchman exhibited strength that was simply marvelous.

He raised the two men bodily, one with each hand, and whirling them around his head, hurled them a distance of several feet.

The Dutchman folded his arms and recommenced smoking his pipe.

The two men got up, joined each other at the distance of thirty yards, and commenced rubbing their heads.

The fat Dutchman smiled, took his pipe from his mouth, yawned and stared toward them.

"Git!" said the rougher of the two men.

They took to their heels and ran.

No sooner had they disappeared than the face of the fat Dutchman relapsed into a broad smile, and as he again took his seat on the bench he said, in remarkably good English, "I think I surprised those fellows."

**A**LTHOUGH the age of invention had captured the country's imagination with Bell's telephone in 1876 and Edison's incandescent lamp in 1878, and although the novels of Jules Verne were enjoying great popularity in those days, science-and-fantasy never quite managed to get a foothold on the dime novels. Raymond L. Caldwell, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, whose collection may be the largest in the world, says that to his knowledge the most important specimens of this genre to appear were the Frank Reade, Jr., novels, which came out first in 1876 in a paper called *Boys of New York*, and were later reprinted in the *Frank Reade Library* (circa 1892). *Frank Reade, Jr., and his New Steam Man*; or, *The Young Inventor's Trip to the Far West*, by "Noname," opens with these lines:

Frank Reade was noted the world over as a wonderful and distinguished inventor of marvelous machines in the line of steam and electricity. But he had grown old and unable to knock about the world, as he had been wont once to do.



So it happened that his son, Frank Reade, Jr., a handsome and talented young man, succeeded his father as a great inventor. The son speedily outstripped his sire.

The great machine shops in Readestown were enlarged by young Frank, and new flying machines, electric wonders, and so forth, were brought into being.

The creator of Frank Reade, Jr. went into considerable detail concerning his character's creations. The Man himself was a structure of iron plates, joined in sections with rivets or hinges. "In face and form," wrote Noname, "the machine was a good imitation of a man done in steel." Further:

The man stood erect holding the shafts of a wagon at his hips.

The wagon was light but roomy with four wheels and a top covering of fine steel net work. This was impervious to a bullet while anyone inside could see quite well about them.

There were loopholes in this netting to put rifle barrels through in case of a fight.

A part of the wagon was used as a coal bunker. Other small compartments held a limited amount of stores, ammunitions and weapons . . . A word as to the mechanism of the man.

Here was the really fine work of the invention.

Steam was the motive power.

The hollow legs and arms of the man made the reservoir or boilers. In the broad chest was the furnace. . .

The steam chest was upon the man's back, and here were a number of valves. The tall hat worn by the man formed the smoke stack.

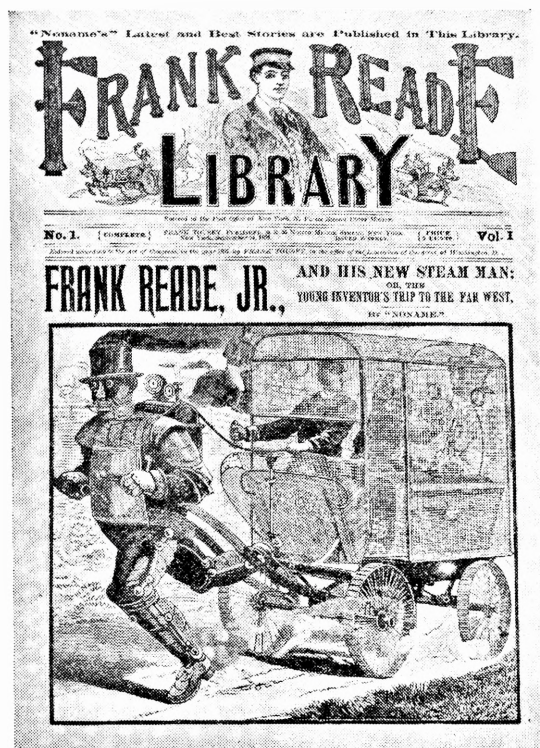
Despite this absorption in technical explanations, the author simply used the Steam Man, the Electric Tricycle, The New Steam Horse and the Clipper of the Clouds as devices to get Frank, Jr. embroiled with the usual run of Indians, kidnappers, jewel thieves, and the familiar parade of charlatans who populated the western and detective novels. Mr. Caldwell says that at times the inventions were borrowed directly from Jules Verne; in one edition of Frank Reade, Jr., in fact, the publishers, presumably with economy in mind, blandly reproduced the plates which earlier had been used to illustrate a Verne book.

No survey would be complete without mention of Horatio Alger, and of his English contemporary, G. A. Henty, whose brave boy-soldiers fought with virtually every important general in history; yet the two men are slightly out of place in this chronology, chiefly because it was seldom that either stuck to a single hero for more than one volume. Alger was an important figure, however, in the sense that his books marked the transition from paper to cloth bindings.

A more important man, however—perhaps the most important in dime-novel history, and certainly the most prolific—did not come along until the little books' popularity was on the wane. When finally he did come, he brought another era with him. His name was George William Patten; he later went by the name of Gilbert Patten, and he signed his works Burt L. Standish. He was the creator of Frank and Dick Merriwell, whose adventures he set down in nearly 25,000,000 words over a

period of twenty years. Beginning in 1896, and with only a few breaks, Patten wrote a novel a week until around 1916. Every one of his books sold around 200,000 copies, which probably makes him the all-time decathlon champion writer—from the standpoints of productivity, sales, popularity and, above all, endurance.

Led by the Merriwells, the upright, clean-cut, athletic schoolboys gradually pratted out the detectives and the



Street Arabs, such as Bowery Billy, a street urchin, or Arab, who spent most of his time hot on the trail of pick-pockets, dope peddlers, and other disreputable citizens. Frank and Dick's lineal descendants, in hard covers, were the Rover Boys, the High School Boys, the Boys of Columbia High, the Motor Boat Boys, Tom Slade and various Boy Scouts, and innumerable others. Shortly after World War I, there was a spate of post-Henty books devoted to such characters as the Over There Boys and the Submarine Boys; and early in this century Frank Reade, Jr. had a "son" in the person of the young inventor Tom Swift. But once established, the schoolboys held their position until the final decline of the series books.

By now, lady readers are probably beginning to wonder why this history has dealt exclusively with books for boys. The fact is that while our grandfathers were reading trash behind the woodsheds, our grandmothers were sitting in the living rooms, in plain sight of the family, their pretty noses buried in volumes of a more "respectable"



cast—those produced by Louisa May Alcott, Helen Hunt Jackson, Mary Mapes Dodge, or Gene Stratton-Porter. In 1868, the spinster Martha Finley published the first of her *Elsie Dinsmore* books; but these, and the same author's *Mildred* series, never really paralleled the fiction turned out for the lads. Elsie's activities, in 5,000,000 copies, were seldom the cause of bloodshed or thunder-clapping. Furthermore, she progressed in age (*Elsie's Girlhood*, *Elsie's Womanhood*, *Elsie's Children*, *Elsie's Widowhood*, *Grandmother Elsie*) while most of her male counterparts, with the exception of Frank Merriwell, remained the same age no matter how many books they appeared in.

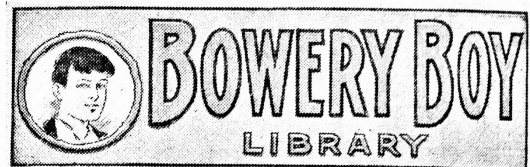
The dying dime novel did not turn its face to the wall without a struggle. Patten's efforts revived the patient to such an extent that it managed to hang on until around 1925, when its historians officially pronounced it dead. At least one authority, John Levi Cutler (in his *Gilbert Patten and the Frank Merriwell Saga*, *The Maine Bulletin*, May 1934), declares that motion pictures were principally responsible. "The dime novel," writes Mr. Cutler, "was an amusement appealing primarily to young readers. On that basis its structure had been erected. And there was needed only a more thrilling and equally expensive amusement to topple it over. The movies offered just such entertainment, even to the fatal similarity of price. . . . The inevitable result was the flow of the American boy's pocket money into the box offices of the movie houses."

The attitude that it's more fun to look than read accounts for the phenomenal rise of the comic book, the belated successor to the dime novel and the series book—belated, but infinitely more popular. Comic book manufacturers, like publishers of series books, are reluctant to hand out exact circulation figures, but even the most conservative of them cannot deny that about 15,000,000 copies are sold each week, which of course means about 780,000,000 a year (or roughly seven times the number of Merriwell novels circulated in a like period). If the fifty-six year life of the dime novel can be taken as a criterion, this means that the comic book, which is now only eleven or twelve years old at the most, is growing in a way that stuns the imagination.

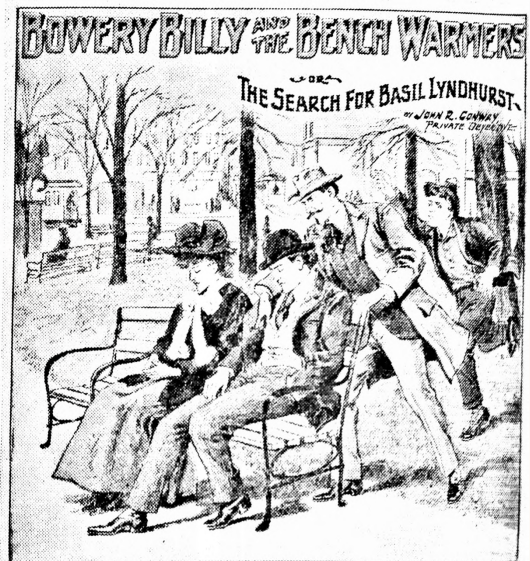
Despite its youthfulness, the comic book already has gone through a number of phases. The first was that of the super-hero: *Superman*, *Batman*, *Wonder Woman*, *Captain Marvel* and *Captain Marvel, Jr.*, *Captain America* and that most astounding figure of all, *The Human Torch*, whose entire body bursts into flame when he is confronted by enemies. The second phase was that of the western and crime story: *Gang Busters*, *Crime Fighters*, *Wild Western*, *Red Ryder*, *Lawbreakers*, etc. The third phase, currently coming into popularity, is that of the teen-age romance and the "confession" love story. Taken as a group, the crime stories are the most widely-read. Their scenarios follow definite patterns: the reader meets the crook either in the beginning of his career or in its latter stages. The crook is shown plotting and executing his crimes. He meets with success in a series of episodes,

and usually is accompanied by one or more beautiful big-chested girls. Finally he is captured, shot down, or put to death by society. The super-hero stories are similar: they open with the villain plotting or executing the crime, and they close with the paragon zooming down through the atmosphere to see that justice is done. The confession stories show a girl engaged to a man who is shown to be faithless, whereupon she runs away from home, meets another impossibly handsome creature, falls in love with him, marries him and lives ever after in bliss.

*Judas of the San Pablo Express*, in the January, 1949 *Crime Fighters*, is typical of current comic book fare. At the top of this strip, an enclosed circle bears the words "Based on a True Story"; at the bottom, as though the editors suddenly had lost their nerve, a line reads, "Any similarity between actual persons or places and those used in this story is purely coincidental." The first frame shows John Percival, a haggard, bespectacled prisoner, telling the reader that he used to be a guard for south-



No. 66 NEW YORK, JUNE 19, 1947 Price, Five Cents



Bowery Billy saw Stiefel stoop over the back of the bench and thrust his hand into the sleeping man's pocket. Like a catamount the street boy leaped upon the sounder's back.

western railroads. For more than twenty years he made the same run, day after day, and, in his own words, "hated every day of it!" The story switches to the present, or graphic, tense, wherein Percival plans to steal a shipment of money—\$175,000. He enlists the aid of Bush Evans, a "saloon hanger-on who . . . could've been mistaken for my twin brother." Bush agrees to board the train when



it stops at Jacinto Wells. Next day, when he does, Percival is waiting for him, pipe wrench in hand. After killing the unfortunate Bush, Percival changes clothes with him and hops off the freight with the swag, gloating, "I'm through with that dreary, monotonous life! I'm free!" All this has occupied twenty-seven pictures. In the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth, the Bush body is discovered. In the thirtieth, Detective Thomas—an oleaginous, cigar-smoking, mustachioed hulk—appears and divines instantly, in two unconvincing frames, that the body in the boxcar is not that of Percival. In picture thirty-four, Thomas says that he'll check Percival's dental chart with that of the corpse. Pictures thirty-five and thirty-six show Percival in jail. The actual "solving" of the crime has taken up five pictures.

**B**EFORE developing a comparison between dime novels and comic books, it's informative to examine some of their writers. It's also depressing. In the days of the Beadle establishment at 98 William Street, a single writer in an upper room often used three or four names, sometimes turning out a seventy-thousand-word novel—written by hand—in a week, dispatching each sheet as it came off his desk into the hands of a printer's apprentice, who whipped it downstairs to be set immediately in type. Often, too, one name was shared by three or four different writers. The use of pseudonyms reached a peak when the series books came in. Edward Stratemeyer, the father of the Rover Boys, wrote as Arthur M. Winfield, Allen Winfield, Captain Ralph Bonehill, Roy Rockwood, Edward Strayer, and at least under a dozen other names.

Some of the dime-novel hacks led lives that were almost as colorful as those of their fictional children. Col. E. Z. C. Judson (Ned Buntline) is described in Kunitz and Haycraft's *American Authors, 1600-1900* (Wilson) as "novelist and ruffian." Judson, who wrote more than 400 serials and novels, ran away to sea as a small boy; was hanged in Tennessee for shooting his mistress' husband, was pronounced dead, and lived to tell of it; instigated the famous Astor Place riot of 1849 in New York, for which he spent a year on Blackwell's Island; and for a time edited a story-paper from a cell. Col. Prentiss Ingraham, author of most of the Buffalo Bill stories and probably Beadle's most prolific employee (more than 600 novels), boasted this combat record: fought (1) for the Confederacy, (2) under Juarez in Mexico, (3) with Austria against Prussia in 1866, (4) with the Cretans against the Turks, (5) in the Cuban ten years' war, and finally (6) in countless Indian skirmishes. None of these experiences apparently affected his good writing-arm. He once completed a 35,000-word novel in less than twenty-four hours.

The majority of the dime-novel hacks, however, were not much more than that. Many, like Edward L. Wheeler, never got much further west than New Jersey; those who came from outlying points seldom ventured beyond their own city limits. Their knowledge of Indians was based

mostly upon data furnished by James Fenimore Cooper and other early American writers. They were, to put it mildly, poorly paid. A 60,000-word novel often brought no more than \$60 or \$70 in the early days, and later around \$250 at the most. This may have been why so many writers became confirmed alcoholics. It was common practice for Orville J. Victor, the chief Beadle editor, to find and capture Wheeler, lock him up in a hotel room, and keep guard over him for several days until he finished a stint. A large number of best sellers wound up as suicides or alcoholics. There were, nevertheless, a number of respectable writers: Edward S. Ellis, one of the most popular, had been a schoolmaster before he turned to trash. Some ministers and a number of lawyers supplemented their incomes by writing for the paper-backs.

If suicide or alcoholism or a similar fate attends those who today woo the comic-book muse, to date no casualties have been recorded. A man named, for the purposes of this article, Milton Pepper, is typical of the new generation of "writers." Pepper is thirty-four, and has been doing business at this stand for about ten years—he has grown up, so to speak, with the industry. His background is fairly commonplace: high school in Seattle, Washington, two years at the University of Chicago, and finally the assault upon the metropolis. During his formative years he lived in Greenwich Village and loafed, and in the war he was a merchant seaman. He had serious literary aspirations at one time, and began working for the comics; he still hopes, at some distant date, to "crash the slicks," or to "hit" *The New Yorker*. He stamps out his product at the rate of nine dollars per page, which he regards quite justifiably as good pay. When he completes a scenario he turns it in to an editor, usually a person his own age or younger, who in turn hands it to a pencil-man. The latter does a rough sketch and gives it to an ink-man, who immortalizes it in Higgins and passes it on to a letterer. After he has inked in the original man's dialogue, the letterer hands it back to the editor, who makes final corrections, changing a word of dialogue or indicating in the margin that a girl's half-torn dress should show more of her left breast. (The editor is often responsible for as many as thirteen or fourteen comic books a month.)

All this is far more involved and conscienceless than it sounds. One comic-book firm buys scenarios regularly from about twenty-five writers, most of whom regularly crib their material either from other writers or from the movies—or from the stage or the classics. ("I used to wonder why all new movies seemed familiar to me," a comic-book editor said recently, "and then I realized that I was seeing the same things I'd okayed a couple of weeks before for one of our magazines. I couldn't figure this out until one day it occurred to me that some of our writers live in places like New Haven, where movies and plays are often shown before they get to New York. Naturally, the writers were adapting the plots.") The above-mentioned firm employs about fifty pencil- and ink-men and about twelve letterers. Its employees uniformly

pretend to despise their work, but all are vociferously proud of their earnings, and all feel no qualms of conscience about the possible effects of their products.

Subliterary material of the kind produced in this factory, like that once turned out by Judson and Ingraham, is usually attacked the moment it appears on the newsstands. As soon as the dime novel showed signs of becoming a national institution, ministers, educators, newspaper editorial writers and professional Comstocks lashed out against it—which was why most boys were forced to read the books in the barn or to hold them in the classroom concealed behind a larger volume, such as a geography. Edmund Pearson once conducted a poll of friends who had read the books in their boyhood. He found very few who actually had been whipped for indulging, but he also learned that most of his interviewees had done their reading in seclusion.

The New York *Daily Tribune* of March 16, 1884, published a typical attack on the dime novel. Its work, the anonymous editorial writer said, was being performed with unusual success: "The other day three boys robbed their parents and started off for the boundless West . . . The heroes of the dime novels are almost always thieves, robbers and immoral characters, and the heroines are no better . . . Through reading this pestilent stuff, a great many boys are undoubtedly put on the road to ruin."

If indeed the trio of young bandits had been inspired by their reading, this is the only accurate sentence in the quotation. The editorial writer clearly had not read further than the sensational covers of the literature he was condemning. These covers often showed a masked bandit holding up a stage or a train, or a thief in the act of stealing, or a woman tied to a railroad track; the material they concealed, however, never glamorized the robber or the desperado. In 1894, the *North American Review* editorialized on the dime novels: "They are, without exception, so far as we can judge, unobjectionable morally. They do not even pander to vice or excite the passions." The truth is that dime-novel heroes were, to a man, like so many Boy Scouts; they were also handsome, daring, polite, and usually so courageous as to be foolhardy. They were never trigger-happy, and killed only to see justice done. If they joined a band of outlaws, they did it in disguise, and only for the purpose of gaining enough information to send the band to jail. Their morals were impeccable—and so, in fact, were those of their enemies: although Indians might capture a girl and drag her across the plains, or tie her to a wild buffalo, they would never have thought of endangering her purity. Calamity Jane always held Deadwood Dick at arm's length; the hero seldom kissed his love, and if he clasped her to his firm bosom it was only to lead her through the steps of a rustic dance, which he didn't enjoy very much. If he swore, his author carefully deleted the actual words and substituted dashes. He sometimes smoked or tossed off a huge swig of firewater—but this was only in the later days of the dime novel, and the fathers of most dime-novel

readers did the same thing, often less temperately. The hero, was, in a word, a man cut from the finest cloth—an excellent example to the youngster who eagerly digested his adventures.

Excellent, that is, in conduct. In opinions, or prejudices, there may be some question of his excellence. He regarded Indians as uniformly dangerous, and therefore as people to be done away with hastily: the "faithful" or "friendly" Indian had no place in the fiction. When Negroes appeared, they usually were characterized as Uncle Toms or as half-simian clowns; the Irish, the Dutch, the Germans were exploited for comic relief. Frenchmen, Spaniards and Italians, and in some cases Mexicans, were mostly presented as villains; Chinese, in their rare roles, were ignorant heathen menials.

The hero believed in carrying out the letter, and the last punctuation mark, of the law. The villain was invariably punished, usually capitally. He was seldom tortured, although he occasionally was forced to submit to some sort of indignity or to the mockery of a group of law-abiding characters. The hero's code of morality was based on the strictest Puritan concepts. His main ambition was to be successful—to own property or to have a large bank account. Poverty, to him, was a minor state of degradation; many of the Street Arab novels showed the hero as coming from "poor but honest" stock, and the conjunction adequately typified the popular attitude. The hero pulled himself from poverty by hard work, politeness, and a generous amount of "common sense," or shrewdness; he never hesitated to compete forcefully in private enterprise, for he could imagine no more ennobling activity. He honored and respected his parents, and often emancipated them.

**T**ODAY the comic books, the most successful publishing phenomena in history, are under attack. Most children, and many adults, admit to reading at least five different comics each week. Here is a partial outline of the fare which is being consumed, and of the ideas being purveyed by this successor to the dime novel:

*The super-hero story.* *Superman*, the first of the successful comics, still outsells all other books, if current circulation figures are accurate. He is, unquestionably, a force for good in his own way. His conduct is based on a high moral plane: he never swears, doesn't drink or smoke, treats women with respect (in most cases). Essentially, however, the super-hero operates outside the law. He often makes a fool of law-enforcement officers and private detectives. He topples buildings, dives through walls, hurls autos through the air and, in general, behaves like some monstrous Puck bent on showing his contempt for society. In the *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, July 1948, Gerson Legman, who has made a study of the super-hero, states: "All of Superman's violence being on the side of right, there is no necessity for any Katzenjammer Kids punishment on the last page, and this ob-



vious flimflam suffices to blind parents and teachers to the glaring facts that the Superman formula is essentially lynching . . . Superman glorifies the 'right' to take the law into his own hands . . . comic books have only succeeded in giving every American child a complete course in paranoid megalomania such as no German child ever had, a total conviction of the morality of force such as no Nazi could ever aspire to."

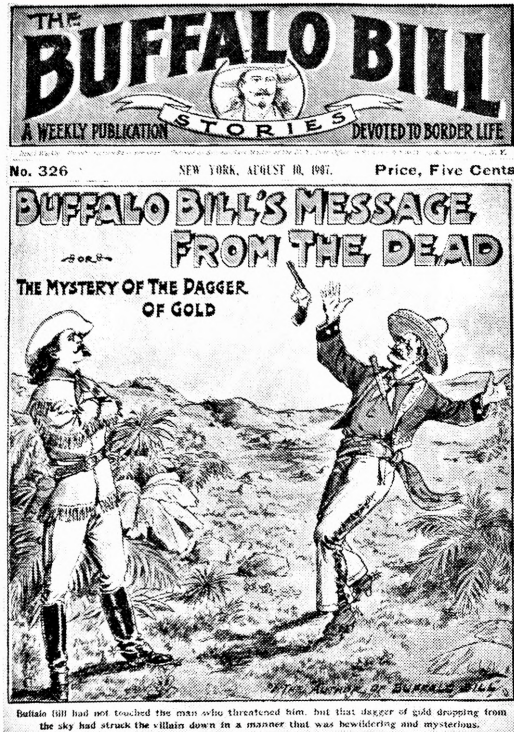
*The crime story.* The saga of John Percival, outlined previously, is an excellent example of the most popular

ly, after a kid has identified himself with the crook in the beginning, and after he's followed him through various adventures, he's going to be a little sorry when the crook gets shot. Sure, he'll resent the officer who does the shooting. Maybe he'll resent all cops. But what the hell, they sell. Kids like them."

*The teen-age or confession story.* The heroine of this type is a beautifully-built, lovely-faced girl, who more often than not is shown in her underwear. She is presented at first with a lover who for some reason turns out to be unsatisfactory, whereupon she finds her love in another man. The couple never entertain any doubts as to their suitability for each other: they meet . . . something clicks . . . they know they are mated. They are shown entering, or leaving, a darling little church, and the reader is assured they are going to be prosperous ever after, for this is the magic of marriage: it provides a panacea for every conceivable illness or maladjustment. There is hardly any truth here for the impressionable teen-ager. Mr. Legman found, in his studies, another angle: ". . . adolescent sexuality is achieved in sadistic disguise, without father-daughter incest, without petting, without even a single kiss; through a continuous humiliation of scarecrow fathers and transvestist boy-friends by ravishingly pretty girls."

The attack on the comic books has been led by Dr. Fredric Wertham, senior psychiatrist of New York City's Department of Hospitals, director of Bellevue and Queens General mental hygiene clinics. He has compiled a terrifying dossier of murders, thefts, torturings and lesser crimes committed by youngsters who admitted under examination to comic-book addiction. Dr. Wertham and his colleagues seem principally concerned with the immediate effects of the literature, and they have facts to back them: a group of boys torture a little girl, a child stabs another in the arm, some boys burn a girl's breast with a cigarette, etc. There are literally hundreds of such cases.

In the face of this documentation, the comic-book publishers remain calm. One cites the fact that in the eighteenth century bookstores were called "slop shops" of literature, because they sold novels, "and that," the publisher adds indignantly, "was the century in which some of our greatest classics were written . . ." The manufacturer vigorously defends the rights of children to read what they want to read. He speaks glibly about freedom of speech, censorship, and the American tradition. He does not add what Dr. Wertham has pointed out: that the child, confronting a newsstand, sees virtually nothing but comic books—that he has no choice but to read them. (Dr. Wertham also points out that censorship of material for adults is far different from planning the proper reading fare for young minds.) A number of publishers, spurred by the action taken in various cities to suppress comic books, have banded together and published a Code of Ethics which they swear to follow in future publications. Several of them have even placed psychiatrists, psychologists and educators on their payrolls, to "advise."



class of comic-book yarn. The "heroes" of these stories are invariably gangsters, kidnapers, professional thieves or con men. Their connivings, plottings and the execution of their crimes are shown in terrible detail. Traitors to the mob have their eyes gouged out; faithless molls are whipped or cuffed, kicked or slapped. Two or three crimes, more often five or six, are carried out with admirable efficiency. In the last few pictures, the detective or policeman enters; like Thomas in the Percival strip, he is a revolting type who looks more crooked than any of the actual crooks. According to their publishers, these stories are presented from the point of view of the criminal in order to give the effect of authenticity—to give the comic a "documentary" quality. In order to keep the vigilant civic and religious groups quiet, the villain is always punished in the end. Yet the real villain is the detective or the cop. As one candid editor said recently: "Natural-



Yet to date the influence of these experts has not dammed the flood of violence. If anything, it is increasing.

In all fairness, it should be said that Dr. Wertham and his fellow opponents of comic books may be exaggerating the dangers of the situation. For every child who commits a crime as a result of reading a comic book, there are hundreds of thousands who do not. But there is no way of estimating how many children have suppressed the tendencies which the comic books feed; and there is certainly no way of telling when these tendencies may turn up, in the form of direct action, in an individual's career.

There is also a longer view. Children are no longer reading as much as they once were; this is admitted even by librarians. If indeed we are now a nation of lookers, this is not necessarily an alarming fact; but the pictures at which children are looking are, or should be, a matter of public concern. The comics occasionally reproduce children's classics—that is to say, they concentrate on their most violent and cruel scenes, so that the boy or girl reader never gets a clear idea of anything but the torture or the murder in the story. The classics themselves, in the libraries, are now ignored by most young readers.

Two conclusions might be drawn from this brief survey.

If the popular hacks reflect their time, it probably is not too inaccurate to conclude that we are degenerating into a nation of lawless, sadistic, frustrated would-be supermen; that our national temper is being expressed in popular literature. If, in the case of comic books, the hacks are not symptomatic—if they are merely engaged in turning out a product which has no real connection with life, but which is manufactured only for the sake of profit—there still can be no denying their potential influence. The strong effect of the dime novels and the series books cannot be disproved. Their influence is still very much alive. What sort of national code of morals can result from the dime novels' successors? What sort of adults will grow from the comic-book readers?

The problem can be solved only after an intensive, scholarly survey of popular literature and its influence has been made. It is useless to tell children to stop reading the comics, and equally useless to attempt to instill conscience in the writers and the publishers. Such an examination is needed at once, for the comic books are expanding at such a rate that Erastus Beadle must be writhing jealously in his grave. It was a long and curiously twisted road from Gold Rifle to John Percival and from Frank Merriwell to The Human Torch. Where this road may lead next is anybody's grim guess.



JOHN H. JENSEN

### GIANTS

WHAT are these giants whose hands we feel  
Over our rushing, breaking tide,  
Forcing the man of strength to kneel—  
Crushed down and beaten, tossed aside?

Do they delight in our dismay?  
How are they hidden, where—and why?  
Can these be Gods? or devils, say?  
Could a God smile—and watch a man die?

Call them the state, the master, king,  
Brainless bare chance—or man's own fate.  
Give them a name the low can sing!  
Give them a name the proud can hate!



# The Circus



RALPH GUSTAFSON

ON the Saturday he was to go to the circus, Jimmy was dressed by his father. He was glad his mother wasn't doing it or Christine, his sister. Christine, who was four years older, hated having to see that Jimmy was properly dressed and made up for it by jerking his blouse or sweater down over him when his arms weren't ready for the holes where the sleeves were. His mother fussed, and liked clothes that made him twist his neck and think of his wrists all the time. The family of four lived on the second floor at the back of a building on the main street in the town. There was one large room, but Jimmy's father had had the landlord put a skylight in the wall so that he could use it for his photographic business, and they had to live in the other rooms, which were small. It was special to be dressed in the Studio. His father needed the largest space available in order to dress Jimmy and was doing it because his mother was staying at his grandmother's while she had his new sister.

Jimmy held on to his father's arm as he stepped up one leg at a time into the pants held out for him. They were his best pants, but he liked them because the corduroy felt good on his fingers and he could pretend trains in its grooves.

"Now, Jimmy," his father was saying, "you know what to do? You are to wait at the foot of the stairs until Granpa and Christine come for you."

His sister had gone with his mother to the country because school opened soon and she wouldn't have another chance for a visit for a long time.

Jimmy said, "I know." But he didn't make his father stop telling him again.

"Papa has to go to Bromptonville to take some pictures." Jimmy's father often went away to different places and brought back pictures of machines and houses.

"Why don't you make pictures of circuses?" Jimmy asked.

His father buttoned his pants onto the buttons around the waist of his blouse. "Perhaps I will sometime," his father said. "Now remember. Don't go away. Stay in front of the Studio. Granpa will come for you. In fifteen minutes."

As soon as his father finished with the buttons, Jimmy hitched his body into his pants better.

"Is there a circus tomorrow?" he asked.

"Just this afternoon," his father told him. "Tomorrow's Sunday."

Jimmy didn't care much for Sundays.

"Do you like lions?" he asked his father. Together they had watched the circus parade the day before. There had been three cages on wheels with a lion in each of them. Jimmy hadn't been afraid, but he decided he'd wait about the lions until he heard them roar. "Why didn't they roar?" he asked again without pause.

"I guess they didn't feel like it."

Jimmy wondered when they felt like it. Probably when they were hungry. "Does Granpa like lions?"

"Your grandfather, Jimmy, likes the circus more than you do."

Jimmy didn't understand the laugh his father made. No one in the whole world liked circuses better than he did. "Does he like Noah's Ark?" he asked.

"No more questions," his father told him. "Papa will be late." He put on his hat, looked to see if he'd left the water running in the darkroom where he kept the pictures in a big tray, then picked up the two cases of cameras, one in each hand, and started for the door. "Come on!" he said.

Jimmy jumped violently up and down a moment to think if he should take anything to the circus with him,

RALPH GUSTAFSON, whose fiction and poetry have appeared before in TOMORROW, is the author of two volumes of verse, *Flight Into Darkness* and *Alfred the Great*, and editor of *New Directions' Anthology of Canadian Poets*.

then, deciding not to, skipped in big hops to the door. The excitement was so huge inside him that he could hardly keep it in his body. He reached up for the knob and opened the door for his father.

"Slam it tight, Jimmy."

Jimmy, from the outside, gave the door such a pull toward him that the glass you couldn't see through rattled. His father turned out the globe of light in the ceiling by the wall switch, to save electricity and to show people he was out, then picked up the cases again. They walked down the corridor to the head of the stairway leading down into the street.

"Careful of the stairs." His father always said that. Jimmy still felt like bouncing, but he took the steps one at a time, hanging at a slope from the banister by his hands and waiting for his father to slide the cameras down from edge to edge in front of him.

When they got to the small landing at the bottom, Jimmy squirmed around in front of his father to open the door into the street. He never was able to, though. It was heavy, but there was also something attached to it at the top that made a hissing sound and closed doors softly like his mother wanted. It made the door too hard to open except when someone pulled with him.

His father helped him, and Jimmy hopped, both feet together, from the doorstep onto the sidewalk. It had



been dark in the hallway and the sudden August sun made Jimmy blink his eyes tightly together once.

Holding the door open with his hip, his father maneuvered the cases onto the sidewalk and then stepped out. The door closed slowly behind him. Jimmy stood obediently for his father to tell him what to do all over again.

"Now wait right here, Jimmy. Granpa will come for you in fifteen minutes. It would be a good idea if you sat right here on the doorstep. You can play elephants

until he comes. Don't go away, or into the street."

Jimmy blew out his cheeks and swung his head first one side and then swung it the other. It meant yes and it meant his father was silly. You couldn't be an elephant sitting on a doorstep. And anyway they had a tail in front and you needed a stick for that.

His father put his hand in his trouser pocket. "Here's a nickel for a balloon. And tomorrow we all go to Granpa's."

Jimmy took the coin. He liked the brown ones better. You didn't have to think where you had put them all the time. But he closed it tightly in his fist. He wanted a balloon, a green one.

His father picked up the two cases and looked down seriously at Jimmy. "So long," he said.

Jimmy said "So long" and then settled himself on the doorstep.

"Have a good time, Jimmy," his father told him, and started off down the sidewalk.

JIMMY watched him go down the street. He would have liked his father to come to the circus too, but he didn't mind being left alone. Anyway, he wanted to pretend there was thunder and lightning and he couldn't see the clowns and would miss the whole circus, because he knew there wouldn't be any lightning. He did it.

When he was through, his father was out of sight. Jimmy bent over his stomach again and held his breath. His father was going five hundred miles and a million and he had to climb up a mountain to take pictures of elephants, but he didn't see the lions hiding. They were yellow and the cage had bust and they crawled out, roaring.

Jimmy thought hard, his eyes wide. Then he quickly let his father kill them with a gun hidden in the camera.

Jimmy jumped to his feet, squeezed his eyes shut and aimed with outstretched arm. "Bang! Bang! Bang!" he shouted.

Then he opened his eyes, forgot the lions and his father, and went to the window of the shop to the left of the doorstep. He lolled up against the window thinking of nothing. He squiggled his nose on the glass. Beyond it were pipes and red tin cans and boxes heaped with tobacco. He pretended he was smelling the smell when his father took the lid off his jar of tobacco. It made him want to eat some.

He stuck out his tongue and made a long lick on the window pane. He happened to look through the lick. He made another and then another and looked again. The pipes were all bent and crazy and half a pile of tin cans disappeared.

Jimmy giggled inside him, then wiped his tongue across the back of his hand and made a face. He examined the tall wooden Indian standing outside the tobacconist's. It wore red and green feathers and held three cigars in its hand. Jimmy didn't particularly like him; the Indian's face was staring and never changed, but he wasn't afraid of him. The circus would be filled with Indians hopping



up and down and yelling and shooting millions of arrows. Then Jimmy came in the tent and the bows and arrows stopped and the Indians fell down on the ground and he was Chief. Jimmy turned his back on the Indian.

He wished his grandfather would come. He swung on his heel, letting out all his breath in a slow ZzeeEEP, ending as loud as he could make it. Then he went and sat down quietly again on the doorstep. If he kept sitting on the doorstep, his grandfather would be made to come sooner. The afternoon sun was still hot and shone over the tops of the buildings across the street directly down onto Jimmy's side of it.

Jimmy looked hard at the people going up and down the sidewalks, untangling them to see if they looked like his grandfather. None of them had a big mustache. He examined the nickel in the palm of his hand. He closed it into a fist again to make more sweat.

The circus would last as long as the parade, and that was seven whole hours long. He wondered what they wanted three rings for. Christine had told him they had three rings under the tent of course, silly. He didn't like the thought because it wouldn't work out into anything he tried to make it.

"I said hello, Jimmy."

Jimmy looked up at the person in front of him. It was Old Miss Hunting. "Hello," he said and went back to thinking.

"What a big boy you're getting! And how is your mother?"

Old Miss Hunting was all right. She also had a watch pinned to her chest. It worked like his mother's tape measure, on a spring.

Jimmy decided to see her work it. "Could you please give me the correct time?" he asked.

Miss Hunting seemed happy about it. "Why, I think so, Jimmy," she said. She fumbled at the watch on her breast, gave it a pull and a dip, and looked. Jimmy couldn't decide whether he wanted a watch that worked that way or not. The noise was a good non-shiver kind, but it was sort of silly to see it.

"It is precisely three ten," said Miss Hunting.

Jimmy considered a moment. "Is that fifteen minutes?" he asked.

Miss Hunting looked responsible. "Not exactly, Jimmy. Fifteen minutes is five minutes more. It is . . . it means ten minutes past three of the clock." She zipped the watch back up into the holder, satisfied.

Jimmy felt the excitement suddenly grip him again. It was time to go. One more minute and . . . they would all burst to the moon even!

"My Granpa's coming!" he told Miss Hunting, making his voice as important as he could.

"Well, isn't that nice," she said.

"We're going to the circus and there's lions and tigers and a million Indians and . . ." Pictures came so fast in his mind he couldn't make names for them. He raised himself and gave his body a bump on the doorstep.

"Gracious!" Miss Hunting commented. "A million Indians! Isn't *that* a lot! But it's getting awfully late to go to the circus, isn't it?"

Jimmy felt the excitement suddenly pause, then fall over the great height in him, swirling the pictures away. He tried to stop them, but what made them go was too big and new for a minute. The circus was real because he'd seen the parade with his father. His father had given him the cent for a balloon. Jimmy squeezed the nickel in his fist. Then he pictured his grandfather.

"The circus *is* too!" he told Miss Hunting.

"Why, yes, I know," she replied a little startled. "I only meant I thought it started earlier."

"It starts precisely half past three of the clock!" Jimmy said with the utmost decision.

"Oh," agreed Miss Hunting. Children were so often unpredictable. "Well, have a good time. And remember me to your mother."

Jimmy said goodbye and watched her go away. His grandfather would come down the sidewalk in one minute and a second.

Jimmy sat in the sun watching the people. He wasn't sure which side of him his grandfather would come from and it made him tired watching that way. Then he stopped because his grandfather would find him if he stayed on the doorstep. He made the circus parade through his head again.

But it didn't parade as well. Parts of it were rubbed out like his father's art-gum eraser did. Then he thought he would think of the mug his grandfather drank out of. It had a bridge on the side of it to keep his mustache from getting wet. Thinking about it made his grandfather easier to picture. That, and his grandfather's crooked finger which was handy for holding reins.

Jimmy became aware of the doorstep against the palm of the left hand he was leaning on. He pressed harder. Then quickly looked at the red wrinkles which the grain of the wood had made. But he couldn't think of anything they were like except red wrinkles. His palm was a dirty gray from the doorstep. He put it to his mouth, made it wet, then rubbed it against his pantleg. The wrinkles didn't come off though. The smudge was like what happened when he used his father's carbon paper and the pencils with the long lead sticking out of them which he wasn't to play with.

Jimmy decided to make a wrinkle in his behind. He bunched up his pants under him and wiggled back and forth on the ridge of cloth. It hurt his bum. He let the word go through his mind. Bum. Bum. Bum. He wasn't supposed to say it.

Then he smoothed his pants, and let out the long sigh which had gathered in him. He wished his grandfather would come now. He'd finished doing almost everything you could do with a doorstep.

Mr. Bray came out on the sidewalk in front of the grocery store in the right of the building. The size of his stomach puzzled Jimmy, but he was glad to see Mr. Bray.

MORROW  
He liked the smell which his machine made when it ground up coffee beans and the lid which went up by a rope over a pulley off the big cake of yellow cheese which he sliced like pie. But that smell wasn't so good.

"Well, Jimmy," said Mr. Bray. "How you feeling?"

"I'm waiting," Jimmy informed him.

"You are, are you?" said Mr. Bray. He looked for a while at nothing particular in the street, then added, "Well, you got a good day for it."

Jimmy was thinking he wasn't afraid of the lions. "I don't like the kally-ope, though," he told Mr. Bray.

Mr. Bray abruptly left off thinking what Saturday afternoon was like. "The what?" he said.

Jimmy patiently said "kally-ope" again. He pictured the big wagon at the end of the parade pulled by six horses, and all the organ pipes, and a man standing at the back hitting at the keys—like a piano, his father said—with his fists. The music came in jerks and spouted steam, only it wasn't music and it bounced off the houses and hit him in the ears.

"It's too loud," Jimmy explained to Mr. Bray.

"Is it, eh?" said Mr. Bray. He scratched under the lobe of his ear with a knuckle of his forefinger. "Well, don't let it bite you," he told Jimmy and went back into the store.

Jimmy puzzled over the words, trying to think how you could get bitten by a calliope, then dismissed them. Grown-up people were always telling him things that were silly. Lions bit. Elephants didn't. They were big and soft and looked lost. He would like an elephant. But close to, their ears looked like they were coming undone and their skin needed ironing. He wondered what you gave elephants to eat. Then, with his fingernail, he began steering trains down the tracks in the corduroy of his pants.

THE sun had gone down behind the buildings when Mrs. Harkness came down the street and stopped before Jimmy. The boy looked asleep. But she no sooner leaned over and touched his shoulder than he straightened, then jumped up.

Jimmy's mind was ready to go—then he saw it was Mrs. Harkness.

"Well!" she said. "How do you do, Jimmy?"

Jimmy looked around for his grandfather, then back again at Mrs. Harkness. He didn't like her. She smelled funny and squinted through her glasses. He closed his lips tight.

"It seems to me a peculiar place to let a little boy sleep."

He hadn't been asleep, but he didn't say anything.

Mrs. Harkness gathered her body in with her elbows. "I'm sure if your mother was home. . . . Is your father home?"

Jimmy said nothing.

"He goes away a good deal, doesn't he?" Mrs. Harkness tucked her purse under her arm to free one hand.

"We'll go up to the Studio, shall we? Together." She put out a hand.

Jimmy responded immediately to the danger. "I'm to wait here," he told her. "He said I could wait here. My grandfather will tell you."

Mrs. Harkness was used to dealing with petulant children. She sidled her head and made her voice cautioning. "Your grandfather?" she queried.

Jimmy became agitated.

"He is so coming!" he shouted. "He is so coming!"

Mrs. Harkness determined to get at the root of the matter. "You will lower your voice, Jimmy. I have not said your grandfather is *not* coming.

Jimmy listened.

"Now. What was your grandfather coming *for*?"

Jimmy suddenly felt indifferent to her. To help the feeling, he sat down again on the doorstep. "We're going to the circus," he said.

"The circus?" Mrs. Harkness considered a moment, then let the triumph come into her voice. "Why, it's past five! The circus is over. You know very well that the circus is over."

A great fear exploded inside Jimmy. A vast emotion like black smothering smoke. He tried to push it away. But it was Mrs. Harkness. If she went away it would go away.

"Liar!" Jimmy yelled. "Liar! Liar!"

Mrs. Harkness gasped. "Really!" she said. She bent forward. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Liar! Liar!" he said at her—but each time he felt the yell subside in him.

"Really!" Mrs. Harkness repeated. The child needed a sound thrashing. "I shall report this to your mother." She held herself erect, then walked off before the gaze of the one or two passersby who were becoming interested. Jimmy didn't even watch her go.

The smother in him started to go, but something happy in him went too. He straightened himself on the middle of the doorstep and sat very still. He didn't want to cry, though he could have made it come. He knew it was more than fifteen minutes now, and his body tired him. But he kept believing with fierce intensity that if he sat just as he was sitting it would make his grandfather come and the circus not be over.

The street became busier, cars began going by in succession, and the number of people who walked past Jimmy grew rapidly. Jimmy sat still and waited. Then he saw his grandfather and his sister coming down the sidewalk. The eagerness in him almost hurt, but he waited.

Then, when they were near, he jumped up. "Can we go to the circus now?" he asked. He held out his opened fist. "That's for a balloon!"

His grandfather stopped as though stunned.

"My God!" he said.

Christine made an indignant mouth. "We've been to the circus, silly. We've *seen* all the elephants and you've been just sitting." She tightened the muscles each side of



her mouth and made her breath come out of her nostrils like her mother sometimes did.

Jimmy could not yet measure the validity of his catastrophe. "Did you see clowns?" he asked.

Christine pretended to control an almost insuperable patience. "Of course, stupid," she said. She turned aloof. "They were all over the place."

Jimmy's eyes watched the scarlet tassel on the new cane which his sister was carrying. He had never seen a cane with a tassel on it before.

"Did Granpa buy the cane for you?" he asked.

Christine twisted her body till she looked down at Jimmy over her hunched shoulder. "Yes, he did," she told him. "And you aren't allowed to touch it."

Jimmy didn't say anything. He didn't question Christine's right of possession.

Then his grandfather did a strange thing. He took the cane with the tassel from Christine, deliberately broke it in two pieces across his raised knee, and walked into the stairway without saying a word.



PEARCE YOUNG

### OCTOBER GARDEN

THIS blaze of leaves, your hand  
 Extended here to mark  
 The flight of birds, the band  
 Of yellow light, the arc  
 Of bees against the blue  
 Periphery of sky,  
 Ascribe all angles to  
 Perfection in the view.  
 No loose arrangements vie  
 The pleasure of the eye.

Yet here where all is ease,  
 Confused within the mind,  
 A world of yellow bees  
 Disintegrates all lined  
 And perfect lucid schemes.  
 The sun in passing seems  
 The light that first began  
 Within old Adam's eyes,  
 Those eyes that could not scan  
 The vertigo of dark.

And all will come to this:  
 The shadow and the bright.  
 No logic can dismiss  
 The burning in the light.  
 Intense and blind, the fruit  
 May fall, gaining some gay  
 Momentum in the mute  
 Explosion of the day.  
 Earth reasons for its all,  
 Absorbing there its fall.

And this is all: the deep  
 Grown pleasure of the day;  
 Waiting for age, the sweep  
 Of yellow gone to gray  
 Exhaustion as the slow  
 October mounts to rain.  
 And what you thought secure,  
 The closed geometry  
 Of your intent will be  
 Half-kept, like love endured  
 To winter and the snow.

# Hometown Revisited

## 9. Paris

R. V. C. BODLEY

ONE day last summer, our family physician called me on the telephone to ask me if I would address the Rotary Club of which he was president. He said that he had heard that I was a renowned *conférencier* in America and that it would give him and his fellow Rotarians the greatest gratification if they could hear me speak about life in the United States. Without much thought of what such a lecture might entail, I accepted the invitation.

American Rotary Clubs were well-known to me. I had spoken to many, but whether they were located in Maine or Maryland, in Oregon or Omaha, they all had one characteristic—hurry. The Rotarians involved seemed always to assemble with a fixed idea of eating as fast as possible, listening to the speaker as fast as possible and getting back to the office as fast as possible. It had always puzzled me why I was paid fees to deliver talks to men whose attention was chiefly concentrated on the clock.

The procedure of a French Rotary meeting could not have been more unlike the same thing on the other side of the Atlantic.

My hosts assembled at noon in a cosy restaurant where eating had obviously been reduced to a fine art. There, for about half an hour, they sipped mild *apéritifs*. They then moved into the dining room and sat down to one of those carefully thought out and carefully cooked meals known only in France. This was followed by coffee and choice liqueurs. When these had been drunk, the diners pushed back their chairs and, with contented sighs, waited for my contribution to the feast.

Remembering the ways of American Rotaries, I asked the president how many minutes had been allotted to my talk.

"Minutes?" he repeated in evident surprise. Then, as I said nothing further, he added: "I do not understand exactly what you mean by 'minutes,' Monsieur? My friends have come here to enjoy your speech, to learn from you. You may continue talking until your topic is exhausted."

With a comfortable sensation, rare to platform speakers, I got up and delivered myself to my audience without even glancing at my watch. When I had finished speaking, there was no shuffling of feet or dashes for the door. There was applause followed by some intelligent and pertinent questions. Then one of the members pulled a watch from his fob. He did this casually and, with equal casualness, remarked, "Ah, four-thirty! Perhaps we should go back to our offices?"

Several mild protests greeted the suggestion as, one by one, my hosts rose from their places, brushed the crumbs from their well filled waistcoats and, shaking my hand, wished me a courteous and cordial *au revoir*.

In a few moments, I was alone with no more of a sensation that I had delivered a ninety-minute talk than that I had scaled the Alps. I felt serene and relaxed. I had, furthermore, the comforting knowledge that, whatever might have happened to destroy the ideals of many Frenchmen, there were still some who knew how to relish the good things of life and were not obsessed with this materialism which was ruining the world. And, as I sat waiting for someone to take me home, my thoughts began to drift back through the years that I had intermittently lived in France. Glimpses of scenes floated before me and faded again in mists of forgetfulness: the majestic Pyrenees, the palm-fringed shores of the Mediterranean, the vines of the Gironde, the woodlands of Touraine and dominating them all as a kind of ineffaceable background. Paris—Paris, my home town, with its spacious parks and splendid avenues, with the Seine silently flowing beneath its venerable bridges.

These last pictures never faded. They were as clear now as when the spirit of life first caused my child's mind to register and reason some fifty odd years ago.

I was born in Paris because my father was a historian. Had my father not been a historian or written novels, I would probably not have been born in Paris. My whole ancestry is English and, as far as I know, no one on my

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father's or mother's side was born out of Great Britain. But my father was a historian and, his subject being modern France, he made his home in that country.

This Paris in which I took my first breath belonged to the last decade of the nineteenth century. It had more in common with the 1800's than with the mechanical era of the 1900's which was waiting for us just around the corner. It was a stimulating Paris, a refined Paris, a gay Paris—a Paris where the lights on the avenues played as big a role as the men and women who lived among them. It was a rich Paris, too, not only in culture but also in material matters.

People lived gracefully. There was no hurry and the way the carriage horses high-stepped was considered more important than getting to a place in record time. My parents had three carriages—a victoria for use in the daytime, a brougham to go out at night and a buggy to take them to the country. The victoria and the brougham were drawn by two horses and had two men in livery on the box. The buggy had one horse and was driven by my father or mother.

There were no regular bathrooms in our house on the Avenue d'Iéna and bodily ablutions were performed in a tub which was carried into the bedroom. I can see it now—a contrivance like a hollow armchair, called a *bain de siège*, being set up on a huge sheet which had been spread on the carpet. With the bath came great metal jugs filled with hot and cold water, and sponges and vast towels and enormous cakes of soap. The washing, too, was as elaborate as the preparation. A bath was a ceremony and was made worthy of the trouble which it entailed. Today, when I rush in and out of a shower, I wonder whether modern methods have made us any cleaner.

To indulge in these bath ceremonies and these carriage ceremonies, to say nothing of the entertaining ceremonies, required a large staff of domestics. In addition to the coachman, there were always three men servants indoors as well as a chef. There was also my mother's maid, the scullery maid, my nanny and the nursemaid. Yet, this galaxy of attendants did not entail a great expenditure of money. Only last summer, I was looking at some of my mother's account books of the period and noted that our *maître d'hôtel*, the highest paid member of the staff, received thirty-five francs a month. At the *then* rate of

exchange, this represented about seven dollars! Today, of course, thirty-five francs is not worth thirty-five cents.

Our house was always full of people, some of whom came to exchange ideas, others to sample the wines and food. Like his adopted fellow citizens, my father liked to eat well and employed a remarkable cook whose sister was a prima donna at the opera. I do not think that the prima donna visited us, but I believe that Gounod, whose music she sang, was among the many who came and went. I cannot, however, remember much about them except as hairy-faced men who insisted on kissing me. In fact, vivid recollections do not crystalize in my mind until 1900 and the opening of the famous Paris exhibition.

It was a tremendous exhibition and, for the first time perhaps in the world's history, brought people from all over the globe into personal contact. The black and the white and the yellow met and rubbed shoulders not only as part of the show but also in the streets and hotels of the capital. The Ritz was beginning to take its place in international affairs and, in its lobbies, the sober talk of the Anglo-Saxons mingled with the chatter of the Latins and the gabble of the Asiatics and Africans.

I was in the Ritz several times last summer and found it one of the few places in Paris which the passing of time had not affected. Neither the decorations, nor the furniture, nor the demeanor or dress of the waiters and hall porters had been brought up to date. There was a comforting self-assurance which neither war nor financial upheavals had touched. As I sat there in the entrance lounge, idly watching the ladies in their "new look" dresses sipping the same execrable tea and nibbling the same exquisite cakes which the Ritz had served since its opening, my thoughts traveled back through the years that I had known this hotel.

THERE were childhood highlights against a rather confused background of incomprehensible and seemingly aimless grownups. In the foreground of these was usually Mr. Ritz like a kind of benign host who always had something sweet to pop into the yawning mouth of a bored little boy. He was a distinguished-looking man who wore a mustache and whiskers cut rather after the fashion of the Emperor Francis Joseph. Attending him always was a veteran waiter who seemed to have no other duties





than to anticipate his master's wishes. One day, Mr. Ritz explained that the old man had once been *his* employer when he was an apprentice in a café. He had been kind to the future hotel king and was now being rewarded with a sinecure post in the luxurious establishment of the Place Vendôme. I don't know why this story stuck in my head, but it did, and whenever I hear anyone using the expression "Ritzzy," I think of its progenitor in a long



white apron serving cheap meals in a third-rate Paris restaurant.

The childhood flashes gave way to adolescent days when I felt much less at ease in the Ritz atmosphere than in those early periods. My sense of values was unbalanced and I tried to appear sophisticated as I entertained young ladies who did not appreciate how many subsequent square meals I would be deprived of by this dining and wining. After that, I was in uniform, on leave from the front during the first world war, no longer ill at ease; in fact, rather overconfident and spending money carelessly with gay companions, many of whom would be dead before the next furlough came round.

From there, my thought drifted on into 1918—to armistice night. For a few hours, the place was in a riot. Soldiers, sailors, waiters, the old and the young dancing, singing, cheering. Over a period of four years, Paris had been under the menace of destruction. She had been bombed and shelled. She had twice had the Germans at her gates. Now she was free. Not even the staid setting of the Ritz was going to put a brake on the rejoicing. But the next day, the habitual calm had returned, which remained unruffled throughout the Paris peace conference which I attended as a junior delegate.

And so the memories flowed on, surging up and fading, saturating me with thoughts which had long slipped into the remote recesses of my mind. I do not suppose that any other place could have roused such recollections as did the Ritz, and this for reasons other than my long association with it, for reasons unexpected to many. The Ritz is as much Paris as is the Boulevard St. Germain and the Avenue de la Grande Armée, in some ways more so, because it mixes up all kinds and classes of Parisians. It has never gone in for exaggerated publicity or put on a

show for the benefit of tourists. It has nothing in common with its namesakes in Boston or New York or even London. Whereas in these Anglo-Saxon editions of the Place Vendôme establishment the chief patrons are people who believe that the address will enhance their prestige, in Paris the Ritz has been as much the center of political and diplomatic intrigue as of social intercourse. During the period that I was an attaché at the British Embassy, one of our surest secret service sources of information was the Ritz's famous head waiter, Olivier. The meetings, the goings and comings, the conversations of the famous and the notorious were relayed to us daily. I am certain, too, that Olivier passed on to the French government anything which he could pick up from our orderlies when he came to make his reports. What nearly became one of the biggest international scandals in the annals of British diplomacy started in a bedroom at the Ritz, and it was in its famous foyer that I inadvertently uncovered the source of a leak in our secret service department which had been puzzling the experts for months.

The Ritz hall porter did more in the spring of 1940 to facilitate the escape of people who were in danger of being made hostages by the Germans than any ministry or railway company or neutral embassy. I know this because I was one of those to whom he gave assistance which probably saved my life.

Today the spirit has not changed. Hand-polished Elizabeth Arden Americans are there with their ultra fashionable clothes, but so are the English with their \$140 a year traveling allowances and the French with their refurbished dresses of 1939. The Americans' smallest whims are cared for, but not because they pay the full price for their board and lodging. The old clients from Europe receive the same attention and the management often forgets the devaluation of the franc when it remembers to present the bill to those whose names are synonymous with the Ritz's great traditions.

Baedeker at the time of the 1900 exhibition says of the Ritz: "Admirable cuisine and cellar. Rooms from fr. 16 a day; with bath fr. 26." The room rates have gone up, but the cuisine and cellar remain admirable. People still go there to enjoy eating and drinking. They also go there to watch and listen. It was the first time that I had really been there with no ulterior motive than to daydream, to collect the past. Every chair, every stool spoke to me of someone or something. I had courted there, and there I had loved. I had relished Clemenceau's words: "*Le plus beau moment de l'amour, c'est quand on monte l'escalier.*" I had laughed there with men, some of whom were now dead, some of whom were now famous, all of whom had believed in a world without strife; and, as I sat on the tapestry-covered chair I wondered whether these last upheavals had shattered their ideals. They had not fundamentally affected mine. I still had faith in something ageless and good, something which lay deeply in me and could not be changed. I had the serenity of someone who has learned to view life compassionately and without envy.

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MY thoughts, at this point, shifted. The Ritz faded and the great Sahara desert rolled out before me in all its arid splendor. I was a nomad Arab, my mind and body were at peace; as far as I was concerned, Paris and all that went with it belonged to a misty past. I felt free and relished the comfort which God's garden gave me. But I was not quite free and, like birds which migrate and remove themselves thousands of miles from their breeding grounds, my instincts one day carried me back to my home town.

I had been absent for many years. I had roamed the Sahara and the plains and mountains of East Asia. I had beachcombed in the South Sea Islands and had written screen plays in Hollywood; and then, one day, I was once more on the banks of the Seine feeling as if I had never been away. It was spring and the chestnut trees on the Champs Elysées were in flower. They looked like fragrant Christmas trees as they shed their pink and white blossoms on the sun-kissed avenue. An atmosphere of great tranquility saturated that Paris of May 1939, and no one seemed to sense the impending disaster which threatened us all. I felt none of the disturbances which were coming to a boil. I tasted each day with the leisurely gestures of a man sipping an ancient wine and, when the Germans drove down from the north twelve months later, I left with the knowledge that, whatever changes the new invasion might bring to the city of my birth, I had stamped on my mind the picture of Paris at her best, the picture of Paris as she really was.

Once more, I was swept away from all my normal associations. Once more, I was the migrating bird, but this time prevented from making my way home because of impenetrable storms. There was not even the means of communicating with those whom I had left behind. I was more cut off than when I had been a nomad of the Sahara or an explorer in East Asia. When, therefore, I did see Paris again eight years after my flight from the Nazi onslaught, I came with slight misgivings, wondering rather what I would find.

This time, I made for the Palais d'Orsay Hotel. The Palais d'Orsay belonged to my earliest Paris associations. With the Pont Alexandre III, the Grand Palais and the Petit Palais, it had been built for the exhibition of 1900 and had been left standing when the other temporary edifices had been pulled down. Like the Ritz, the Palais d'Orsay had been a means of conjuring up childhood memories, and these I felt I needed badly now. Neither was I disappointed. Not only did the exterior of the hotel appear to have suffered no war damage and the lobby to have as much red and golden furnishings as in its palmy days, but standing by the desk was the manager who, in various capacities, had worked there since the opening. He looked rather careworn and, while he spoke with animation of the golden days before the first world war and of the irresponsible interlude between the two conflicts, I felt that he considered them dead and buried and never to be resurrected.

Rather shocked by this pessimism, I went up to my room. As the *valet de chambre*, in the same kind of striped, black-sleeved waistcoat which French hotel servants have worn for centuries, opened the door, the forty-eight years since the Paris exhibition seemed to be ripped away like a huge curtain. What lay beyond the threshold had all the trappings of those bygone days. The lofty ceiling, the ornate, gilt framed mirror above the sculptured mantelpiece, the massive cupboard, and the spacious bathroom with a bath in which a man could easily drown, were there in all their ancient dignity. The bed was majestic and solid, so were the chairs. The only indication that the year was 1948 and not 1900 was the notice on the door which informed me that the room rate was 1000 francs a day instead of seven francs or, with all meals, fifteen.

But this did not disturb me and, pulling back the heavy plush curtains which covered the twelve-foot window frames, I looked out. Once more, I saw the view which has no equal in the world. In the immediate foreground, the Seine flowing sluggishly beneath its ancient bridges. Beyond the quays, the trees of the Tuileries Gardens, bright green in their spring foliage. Then a glimpse of the Vendôme Column and away in the lofty distance the domes of the Sacré Coeur dazzlingly white against the blue sky.

With a sigh of relief, I allowed the picture to imprint itself on my mind. In spite of the manager's gloomy outlook, the physical aspect of the city of my birth remained unaffected by these years of war. While London and Berlin were scarred and battered, Paris was intact. I felt comforted. The fear of disillusion had been banished by this incomparable panorama. I turned back into the room and began gaily to put away my things, wondering whether I had ever occupied these quarters as a youth.



I was home and everything was going to be wonderful. This state of mind did not last long.

My first deception came at sundown. Not only was there no traditional burst of dazzling illumination as dusk gathered over the city, there was no light at all. The twilight deepened into darkness with hardly a street lamp turned on. To my comment, the concierge shrugged his shoulders. The country was short of coal and power had

to be economized. Neither did the man say this with emotion. He hardly looked up from his desk. My question, together with the fact that I wore the rosette of the Legion of Honor and spoke fluent French made it obvious that I was not a potential source of foreign income. As far as he was concerned, I could go and lose myself on the quays. This I avoided by making my way to the Palais Bourbon and thence across the Place de la Concorde to the Grands Boulevards.

Here, there was a certain amount of movement, but the spirit was not the same which I remembered. The restaurants were full and the cafés crowded. The usual nucleus of tourists were there trying to convince themselves that they were seeing life. But the general atmosphere was foreign to me. The men and women who strolled or sat were not only shabby in dress but shabby in expression. They lacked animation and had nothing which remotely belonged to the people I had known so intimately.

**D**URING the course of the next few weeks, I shifted my investigations to every quarter of Paris. To the one-time home of the artists in Montmartre, to the supposedly Bohemian streets and squares of Montparnasse, to the shopping centers, to the fashionable districts about the Arc de Triomphe; and everywhere I found the same thing. The spirit of Paris seemed to have gone. Even the Champs Elysées, the most splendid avenue in the world, had been deprived of its unique beauty by the introduction of shops and cinemas and cafés where there had once been only private residences and a few dignified hotels.

I went back to the place where I was born. The Avenue d'Iéna, I was relieved to find, had not had its character tampered with by architectural experiments. The yellow door of the carriage porch where the victoria used to wait for my mother looked as it always had. The furnishings of the concierge's *loge* appeared to be the same as when I was a child. I began to feel as reassured as when I had found myself in the old-fashioned atmosphere of the Palais d'Orsay. I decided that it would do me good to go inside the house and see what had been done to the rooms where I had taken my first steps. However, no sooner had I crossed the threshold than a man who was obviously some kind of municipal official confronted me and asked me what I wanted. He cut short my unrehearsed explanation that I had been sent to visit an apartment by demanding my credentials. When I mentioned the name of a fictitious person whom I said lived at this address, he shook his head. No such person lived there, in fact no one at all lived there—these were the offices of the United Nations!

I stared at the man for a moment unbelievably. Nothing he could have said would have depressed me more. I had taken part in the Paris peace conference of 1919, I had seen the beginnings of the League of Nations, I knew the futility of trying to establish world peace by a body of men none of whom knew the meaning of spiritual

serenity. It seemed ironical that an organization for which I had such a poor opinion should prevent me from entering the house of my birth!

Rather dazed, I stumbled into the street. Without much thought of where I was going, I continued down the Avenue d'Iéna and, crossing the Seine, eventually arrived at the feet of the Eiffel Tower. Looking back, I became aware of a galaxy of flags above a crescent-shaped building. It was white and unfamiliar. Then I remembered that it was the Palais de Chaillot, the meeting place now of these United Nations which had usurped my home. The architecture was cold and modern and had none of the picturesqueness of the minarets and Moorish arches of the old Trocadéro which had stood in its place. I turned my back on the banners which flapped ununitedly in the mischievous breeze and looked up at the Eiffel Tower. That, at any rate, had lost none of its metal dignity.

Thinking that I might recapture some of the old spirit of Paris at the Opéra, I went there. My association with this Second Empire architectural masterpiece dated back to my childhood. At the age of eight, I had been taken there to hear Jean de Reszke sing in *Siegfried* and *Lohengrin*. People said that I was much too young to understand this kind of show. I am not so sure. The pageantry of the two plays, the flame-breaking Fafnir and the swan-drawn boat of the Knight of the Holy Grail impressed me more then than at any of the subsequent occasions when I witnessed these operas, much more so certainly than on this autumn evening of 1948. In fact, I felt that I had strayed into a small town provincial theatre in the off season!

The white-tied members of the Jockey Club, for whom the front rows of the stalls used to be exclusively reserved, had disappeared. The boxes were no longer gay with lovely ladies in lovely dresses. It seemed a pity that the gas lamps of my early recollections had been done away with. The electric lights emphasized the leprous gilt and the faded plush. The only familiar figure was the old lady who looked after the men's room. As I left my tip in the traditional saucer, which had probably been there in the days of Calvé and Plançon and Patti, I commented on this loyalty to a humble post. With a smile, the guardian of *lavabos* replied: "*En effet, Monsieur, j'ai trente ans de théâtre.*"

It was one of the few comforting remarks which I had heard up to this point of my stay in Paris. It rang with the traditional spirit of Parisians who respected their jobs regardless of what they might represent to outsiders. The old lady was proud of her connection with the opera and considered herself as a member of the stage freemasonry. But she appeared to be alone. The spirit of this city, where gaiety and culture once thrived side by side, had changed. It had been swallowed by something unidealistic and corrupt.

Yet had it? Was I not accepting outward appearances too much as might a tourist who came to France prepared to find fault? Was I not, perhaps, trying to



recapture something which had died in *all* the cities of the world? Was there not, maybe, more culture in Paris and among Parisians than elsewhere? It was very hard to tell because the average man and woman one encountered had buckled on a kind of armor which it was hard to penetrate. All these years of German occupation had made every citizen suspicious of his neighbor and doubly suspicious of the foreigner.

The headwaiters whom I had first known when they were *chasseurs* running errands had the same dignified exterior of all French *maîtres d'hôtel*. The *sergents de ville* still directed the erratic traffic with excited white batons. There were a few *boulevardiers* who strolled with apparent leisureliness. But what was inside those suits and uniforms and liveries I could not tell. The inability to penetrate the thoughts of these people among whom I had been brought up baffled and irritated me.

Then, one day, I chanced on one of those French households which had never had much to do with foreign residents or visitors. To them, the Germans had been a plague to be accepted like other epidemics and from which one eventually recovered. No one in the household had ever been contaminated by collaborationist intrigues or embittered by underground activities. No one had betrayed anyone else or become rich on the black market. In fact, in spite of privations, life had continued traditionally as in former times.

The family had remained the fundamental unit of the community, with the father as the accepted ruler of the

house. His politics were respected, his comforts considered. The mother still controlled the bringing up of the daughters until they married and watched over the comings and goings of her sons. The curé still had his say in the education of the children, and going to church was carried out as a matter of course. Communism had made no headway.

Sitting in the dining room of these old friends, I appreciated that eating and drinking and the art of conversation had as great a place in their daily life as heretofore. The thoughts which we exchanged were not controversial but formed, nevertheless, the basis for logical argument. The dearth of paper with which to manufacture books was deplored, but it was not regarded as a good reason for young writers to become discouraged and cease to express their ideas. The politics of Great Britain and the United States were referred to, but rather as if they belonged to a different world. There was not the vaguest suggestion that anyone would wish to emigrate. I am certain, moreover, that Monsieur and Madame would have been supremely unhappy with a tub-shower and an electric stove. The *bain de siège*, and the *sole au vin blanc* and the *poulet chasseur*, which we had eaten accompanied by appropriate wines, could only have been cooked over a coal fire.

That dinner did me good and, as I walked through the dimly lit streets toward the Quai d'Orsay, I felt satisfied that, regardless of certain outward appearances, nothing could destroy the fundamental charm and culture of Paris. It was my home town and I was proud of it.



# TO AWAKEN PEGASUS

LORD DUNSANY

O PEGASUS, old Pegasus,  
Why stand you in your stable thus  
With eyes closed and with head hung low,  
Not noticing what wind may blow,  
Not caring if the sky may glow  
Or if the East wind cover it  
With heavy clouds that hint of snow,  
Nor looking when the West is lit  
With glory at the end of day  
Enchanted by a golden ray;  
Nor yet remembering, I think,  
Old gallops at the morning's brink  
Or just as daylight dreamed away  
And stars come gliding two by two  
Out of immensities of blue  
To let their silver lances play?  
Why stand you listless there, the cold  
Of January in your bones,  
Surrendering to the wind that moans  
About you from the wintry wold?  
Lift upward, as in days of old,  
Your pinions when you see me come  
And let your hooves be frolicsome,  
Which even yet are shod with gold.  
Mount with me where the great winds drum  
Upon the mountain-tops, and see  
Once more the clouds all silvery  
Which on the earthward side are dull.  
And see old forests beautiful  
But tiny, spread beneath us far,  
And free and shining like a star  
Soar higher than the wild geese are,  
Or any wanderer but you  
Lonely and splendid in the blue.  
Come! We will see the earth flash through  
Rifts worn by breezes in the bright  
And hilly surfaces of clouds.  
And cities may come into sight  
On market-days, with tiny crowds  
Moving below us in the light  
Less brilliant than the light that gleams

All round us; we shall see the streams  
That shine among the vales and creep  
Through fields, as through the dark of sleep  
Go glimmering the shining dreams.  
Below us gray and swift and small,  
Unseen by all, or nearly all,  
Our shadow through the earth will run,  
Or on the clouds, made magical  
With all the colors of the sun.  
Shall we go southwards once again  
Over the poplar-lands of France  
And then the cypresses, and glance  
Downwards one morning at the plain  
Sunny, and brilliant with the glow  
Of nectarine and peach ablow,  
And then the lovely lands of Spain,  
Full of anemones, where go  
The swallows that escape our snow;  
Then, bluer than the bluest stain  
Our dyes can make, there will appear  
The splendor of the midland sea,  
With curving purple lanes that steer  
Across it, currents wandering free,  
Eastwards to sunny Italy,  
Or southwards to the land where palms  
Over the flat-roofed houses grow,  
Shining serenely in the calms  
Of Africa, or bowing low  
Before its storm-winds. South will we  
Go once again, and hear the song  
The Arabs sing to flute and drum  
At evening; or the whole night long  
Sometimes one, slipping from the hum  
Of people in the narrow street,  
Will sit alone and sing for some  
Strange cause a mood has brought to him.  
Above them in the twilight dim  
And brief we shall hear play once more  
Those plaintive notes with which the shore  
Of Africa is all a-ring  
And which the Arabs southwards sing



Far out in the enormous blue  
 Of the Sahara. Always new  
 Seem that great desert's frowns and smiles.  
 Across it for a thousand miles  
 We will go South and see where stand  
 The mountains rarely seen by man  
 Lost in immensities of sand  
 Beyond the track of caravan,  
 Lost mountains through whose vales there ran  
 Some rivulets when time began,  
 With small streams running down to them;  
 But rivulets and streams are dry  
 Cold sand. There like a diadem  
 Of rubies hanging in the sky  
 At sunset we shall see their peaks,  
 While all around the desert speaks  
 With silence, which one understands  
 In those immeasurable lands  
 And soon forgets. But I shall tell  
 The message, if you bear me well,  
 And men in other lands shall hear  
 Sahara's secret, that is told  
 When all its treasury of gold  
 Turns azure and the mountains rear  
 Above it the unearthly glow  
 Upon their precipices sheer  
 That Arabs of the far lands know.  
 This we shall see again, and see,  
 Beyond the dry immensity,  
 Scrub, thorn-bush, halfa-grass and tree  
 Appearing on the other side,  
 Thickening as we southward ride,  
 Until red trunks appear, and gold  
 Mimosa shines, and we behold  
 All round again fertility.  
 Still southwards ride we; or shall we  
 Slant somewhat eastwards, till we sight  
 That river that through history  
 And down through Africa has rolled  
 Two streams, one blue, the other white,  
 Which meet in one bed at Khartoum,  
 Where roses have been lured to bloom,  
 Then roll together to the North  
 With deserts by them all the way  
 Playing at water where is none,  
 But only the tremendous sun  
 Glaring upon the earth in wrath;  
 But southward, southward lies our flight  
 Where the papyrus-swamps reveal  
 Some wonders, and the rest conceal,  
 And fires break out that no men light,  
 And where the situtunga hides;  
 And southward still, to where the Nile  
 Grows narrower and there beguile  
 Themselves upon its olden flood  
 Hundreds of hippopotami,  
 And all along the river's sides  
 Lurk crocodiles upon the mud,  
 And pythons in the rushes lie,  
 And underneath the awful smile  
 Of Africa's tremendous sky  
 Impalas leap and bright birds fly  
 And elephants go trampling by.

Then we shall see the morning wake  
 On Africa's enormous lake  
 And still go South, and haply catch  
 Above the Masai's roofs of thatch,  
 Above the trees, above the world,  
 With head and shoulders snow-empared  
 The mighty Kenia; or, his head  
 Black, with white locks along it strewn,  
 Kilimanjaro may be shewn  
 And passed, where we have southwards flown.  
 The plain, the African red plain,  
 Green where the grass has known the rain,  
 With purple shadows cast by clouds,  
 Will come into our sight again.  
 And then the forest, which so shrouds  
 And hides the earth of Africa,  
 Will lie beneath us on our way  
 Two thousand miles, and we shall guess  
 What creeps in its great shadiness,  
 Where skipping on from tree to tree  
 Our shadow goes, and we shall see  
 More clearly as our height grows less,  
 When bird-like you shall dip with me,  
 The little narrow tracks that stray  
 About that mighty wilderness.  
 Then we shall soar again, till small  
 As houses in a box for play  
 Of children we shall see a Kraal  
 Of Zulus underneath the tall  
 And aged trees that, as we pass,  
 Look no more than a thick coarse grass.  
 And tiny on the ground will show  
 The boma, Africa's rough hedge  
 Built of dead thorns to guard them all  
 That live in the round huts below  
 From lions prowling at the fall  
 Of night, when the hyenas call  
 Like lost souls howling at the edge  
 Of Hell, to which they soon must go.  
 Still southwards, while about us glow  
 The great cloud-mountains peak on peak,  
 Brilliant as silver or as snow,  
 And underneath us Mozambique.  
 Then Zululand, with grass on fire,  
 For thus the Zulus mow their hay.  
 Add then the mountains rising higher,  
 And, smiling at the radiant day,  
 Natal among its hills is seen,  
 A lovely half-barbaric queen  
 Enthroned on crags of Africa.  
 And sometimes we shall see descend  
 From those high crags, that seem to stand  
 As though they watched at the world's end  
 To look into some other land,  
 One of those waterfalls that are  
 The wonders that adorn Natal,  
 As those that down from Karkloof fall  
 Or over Howick's polished wall,  
 And wind past aloë-trees, and bend  
 By kopjes and beneath the scar  
 Of ancient earthquake, till there comes  
 A murmur as of distant drums,  
 The Indian Ocean heard afar,

## T O M O R R O W

Singing as softly as a star  
Seen lonely in an evening clear,  
That in its orbit sings and sings  
Of luminous and lucid things,  
But reaches not one earthly ear.  
And Capricorn shall disappear  
Behind us as your gleaming wings  
Sweep southwards, and the veldt shall sigh  
Below us desolate and dry  
But magical, inhabited  
By ants in houses smooth and high,  
And meerkats dwelling in the red  
Hot earth, and lizards, and the dead  
That under stony kopjes lie,  
Left by old battles. Southward through  
The cloudless dome of burning blue  
Above the mirages that gleam  
From Africa's unreal dream,  
We shall soar over the Karroo,  
Whose scented bushes to the extreme  
Horizon dot the arid land,

And in between them is dry sand  
And the Hex River Mountains stand  
Beyond them, at whose mighty feet  
Grow vines and fields of maize and wheat,  
And generous Nature and the hand  
Of Man combine there to defeat  
The wilderness that seems to prowl  
So near. Now milder grows the heat  
And we see twilight once again  
And, with his head in its white cowl,  
Arising sheer out of the main  
Is Table Mountain at the end  
Of Africa, and thence extend  
Two oceans, and the southern whales  
Hurl up into the air their fountains,  
Where, rising from their flowery vales,  
The Twelve Apostles, those grave mountains,  
Look out on them and distant sails  
That fleck the blue seas spread below  
From there to the Antarctic floe.  
Come, Pegasus! Shall we not go?





# Folly Folks: Our Modern Troubadours

WILLIAM A. OWENS

FOR close to twenty years I have been a collector of American folk music. With my recording machine I have traveled through the backwoods communities of the nation, recording, transcribing and analyzing the songs of the "folly folks." The project, begun as a hobby, led to a deep interest in the cultural strains of our folklore. "Folly" singers are the poets and musicians of the crossroads, shaping songs inherited by word of mouth from an older generation to community names and events. Sometimes they turn historian and make up new songs about local tragedies or catastrophes. Whatever the racial origin of the community—Anglo-Saxon or Negro, Mexican or Cajun French—our modern troubadours create both theatre and concert hall for the audiences of the plains and backwoods. The singers I have found in my wanderings are all touched by the same brush of creative genius and a simple sense of human dignity.

Let me begin by telling you about Sister Crockett.

One morning Rose Bernard, a specialist in Jewish folk music to whom I had often appealed for help in finding folk singers, heard a tap on the back door at her home in San Antonio. She answered it and found in her driveway a fringed-top buggy with a sign, "Jesus Saves," painted across the front. On the doorstep stood an old Negro woman dressed in a costume she had created for herself as a minister of the Gospel. She had a priest's cassock, long enough to sweep the ground behind her, a priest's collar, and a nun's black veil, from which her kinky white hair stuck out in bunches.

"Good mawnin', honey," she said, showing a wide row of polished white false teeth.

"Good morning," Rose replied, somewhat taken aback. "Who are you?"

"I'm Sister Crockett. Ain't you heard of me?"

"No," Rose replied.

"You must a seen me on the streets. I sell hominy to white folks. Need some, honey?"

Attracted by her magnificent appearance and sincere

manner, Rose invited her in, not to buy hominy but to satisfy her own curiosity.

"I pastor my church at night," Sister Crockett continued when they were inside.

"Your church?"

"Yes, honey. I got a church over by Zarzamora. Me and my husband pastors it together. I sing when I preach. One day a white man come to me with a talking machine and caught me in it and now I'm in Congress."

"What did he catch you with?"

"Some jump-ups from the church . . . and a song I made up."

Rose thought quickly. "Was John Avery Lomax the man that put you in Congress?" she asked.

"Honey, that's the man. You know him?"

"No, but I've heard of him. You must mean he put you in the Library of Congress."

"Honey, that's the place. How come you know?"

"A friend of mine does the same kind of work. You sit right down and I'll call him."

I happened to be in San Antonio at the time recording Mexican songs on the West Side. By the time Rose found me, Sister Crockett had gone on to peddle her hominy, leaving instructions for us to come on to her house.

We arrived at a little house a block off Zarzamora near a small white church. A believer in signs, Sister Crockett had painted passages of Scripture and exhortations over the entrances to her house and stable. Her walls, as we discovered when we were inside, were also covered with Scripture and mottoes.

The house was small and packed with old furniture, but neatly kept. In it Sister Crockett seemed perfectly in place despite her strange clerical garb.

While I was setting up the recording equipment she gave a running account of her life. She had been born and brought up in Tennessee. There her husband came courting her, winning her by "coming across the meadows at night playing his gittar and singing sweet songs."

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Together they drifted to Indiana and Ohio, and finally to San Antonio, where they built their home and church. Now her husband was busy all the time with the church, while she sold hominy by day and preached by night.

"What will you sing for me?" I asked.

"I got a new song I just made up. I call it 'Staggerin' Home.' It's a kind of temperance song."

"How did you happen to make it up?"

"Usually I get my songs when I'm preaching. I get to feeling good and they just come to me. This time it was different. I was going along Zarzamora in my buggy and I saw this white man staggerin' along. He was full—so full he didn't know where he was going. I looked down at him there and saw how miserable he was. Before I knew it the way he looked was getting to be a song in my mind."

She got up and began pacing back and forth across the room, imitating the stagger of the drunken man. Then her powerful voice boomed out the words:

*Staggerin' home, staggerin' home.  
Mother and children waitin' alone. . . .*

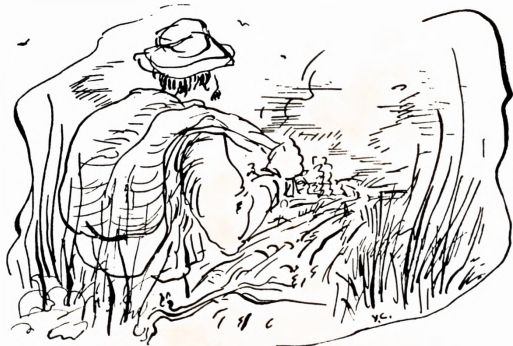
In a dozen or so stanzas she gave detailed descriptions of the evil effects of drink on this white man. Suddenly she stopped.

"I ain't got no patience with songs that don't come out right," she said. "I got to show folks how even a drunk can straighten up and live right."

Again she strode about the room. This time her body was straight and her step firm and sure. There was a happy quality in her voice as she sang:

*Walkin' along home, walkin' along home,  
Wife and children, lookin' for me to come. . . .*

All afternoon she sang for me. Sometimes she sang spirituals she had known since childhood; more frequently the songs she had made up to emphasize points in her



sermons. She also preached two sermons for recording—one entitled "Love," in which she gave a remarkably beautiful description of her own courtship and marriage as an example of what earthly love can be, the other was on "Modesty." In the second she spoke at length on the evils of wearing short skirts—looking at Rose all the time—and ended up with: "And I say to you, all that American

women knows about modesty . . . is what they find in the dictionary."

When we had finished the recordings and I was putting away the equipment, she said to me: "You gonna put me in a book?"

"I may."

"I'd be thankful if you'd put me in a book," she said simply.

I'd like to put her in a book, but words can't describe sufficiently the stately bearing of this white-haired Negro woman in her priest's robe and nun's veil, the deep sincerity of her voice grown husky preaching and singing and shouting "Hominy for sale!" through the streets of San Antonio, or the glow of her face and eyes as she sings:

*Oh, Freedom! Oh, Freedom!  
Oh, Freedom over me!  
And before I'd be a slave  
I'd be buried in my grave  
And go home to my Lord  
And be free.*

FROM San Antonio my path led inevitably to the Mexican Border. In two weeks I worked from Piedras Negras to Rio Grande City, getting the flavor of Border singing, recording a number of delightful animal songs, like "El Burrito Sabio" (The Wise Little Donkey); "El Tecolote" (The Hoot Owl), and "El Puerco Pinto" (The Spotted Pig). I also heard a ballad, "Caballo Prieto de Pancho Villa" (Pancho Villa's Black Horse), a song full of admiration for Villa, containing the remarkable lines which I translate freely:

*The sow does not love her piglets more dearly  
Than Pancho Villa loves his black horse. . . .*

One afternoon, Americo Paredes of Brownsville and I worked our way through the *cantinas* of Matamoras looking for wandering minstrels and listening to their songs. In one *cantina*, we heard a Mexican youth singing variations of the traditional "Cielito Lindo," accompanying himself on a guitar, while a group of beer and *tequila* drinkers joined him at times. His variations, characteristic of the genuine folk singer, superimposed on the original his own experiences of melody and rhythm. At times his rhythm was that of the *huapango*, the dance rhythm of Guadalajara; in other songs he used the Negro blues rhythms he had heard on the American radio. This strange mixture of Spanish, Indian and Negro sounded natural, unfettered by race or convention, a genuine fusion of folk art and emotion.

In a *cantina* in the poorer section of town, we found a young man with a Cantinflas face playing a concertina and singing long *corridos* about Border heroes and badmen. The loungers called him "Pepe," and listened respectfully throughout his long ballads. One was "El Corrido del 'Red See,'" a ballad about a famous Border patrolman who had broken many a band of smugglers



and who at that time was stationed on the International Bridge at Brownsville. "El Corrido del Enganche" was the story of three hundred Border Mexicans taken to Pennsylvania to work on the railroads. It was a curious mixture of humor at the plight of the "Mexicanos" and anger at their treatment at the hands of the "Gringos." Translated freely, the ballad runs:

*From the city of Fort Worth  
At six in the morning  
We set forth in a group  
For the state of Pennsylvania.*

*My wife said to me,  
"I am going with this group  
To wash your clothes  
And to give you assistance."*

*The agent said to us,  
"You cannot take your family,  
For workers do not pass  
By the state of West Virginia."*

*While passing through West Virginia  
We saw some Italians.  
The Italians said to us,  
"Where do you come from, Mexicans?"*

*And we answered,  
"From Fort Worth in a freight car.  
We are going to Pennsylvania  
To escape picking cotton."*

*Now with this I declare  
With my hat in my hands,  
And my faithful companions  
Are three hundred Mexicans.*

Finally the young man sang "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez," a ballad I had not heard before. From Americo I learned that Gregorio Cortez had been a minor smuggler and cattle rustler before he was captured by the Americans with "pistolas en los manos" and sent off to the penitentiary. It was a delightful ballad, full of the usual Border heroics, and I was determined to get a record of it.

Since I had not been allowed to take my recording equipment into Mexico, I had been paying singers to cross the Rio Grande and sing their songs on the American side. When I asked Pepe to go with me, he became greatly alarmed and tried to escape. With Americo to help make him understand, I offered persuasion and money. It was no use. When I asked why, he answered cynically, "Los Americanos." Whatever had been his experiences with Americans or the Border patrol, it was soon apparent we would never get him to set foot on the other side.

Finally we worked out a plan. He would sing the song over and over again—at ten *centavos* a time—until Americo could learn it well enough to record it for me. That was a satisfactory arrangement. He pushed his clownish little cap on the back of his head and began to

sing. Soon Americo, with his ready gift for imitation, was singing the song in the manner of Pepe. A crowd of working men and loafers gathered around them, laughing loudly each time I gave Pepe a *dima*. "El Pocho," they called Americo, "the discolored one," because, though he looked like a Mexican, he had taken on so many ways of the Gringo. But they lost their resentment of his Americanisms as they listened to him sing.

A little old Mexican man with white hair and white handle-bar mustaches slipped through the crowd and came up to me.

"*Muy estimado Senor*," he said, addressing me in refined Spanish. "I have the honor of being the uncle of Gregorio Cortez." He was obviously proud that his nephew had achieved the immortality of being the subject of a ballad. When I play the record now I hear the voice of Americo, but I see the comic face of Pepe and the great pride of the old Mexican.

FREQUENTLY I am asked how I get people to sing for me. I usually answer by telling how I first got the "Uplifted Fo'," a Negro quartet, to make records. While two of them talked the matter over, a third turned to me and said, "Yas, suh, we'll sing. I wants to *heah me*." That eagerness to "heah me" was enough in most cases to make the shiest singer face the microphone.

The "Uplifted Fo'" Quartet was made up of General Washington, his brother Colonel Washington, and two other men, all workers on cotton plantations in the Brazos bottoms in central Texas. I spent a great deal of time with them and learned much about Negro life and music, especially quartet music, a form so popular that no church can go through the year without holding a quartet contest in which singers from other churches are invited to compete.

The "Uplifted Fo'" sang many spirituals for me—like "Dry Bones," "Daniel Saw the Stone," "Jericho," "Toiling," and "Leakin' in the Building."

"Dry Bones" illustrates the particular quality of piety and earthy imagination which characterizes these spirituals:

*Oh, de finger bone's connected to de hand bone,  
De hand bone's connected to de wrist bone,  
De wrist bone's connected to de elbone,  
De elbone's connected to de shoulder bone,  
De shoulder bone's connected to de neck bone,  
De neck bone's connected to de head bone,  
De head bone's connected to de ear bone  
Jes' to hear de word of God.*

Refrain:

*Oh, Lawdy, dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones,  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones,  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones,  
Jes' to hear de word of God.*

Once when I asked General Washington to tell me how

his quartet sings, he said, "The leaduh sings the words, and the rest offuls comment." This "comment" is usually a word or phrase sung over and over again in harmony as an accompaniment for the melody. Frequently the lead goes into a falsetto humming entirely independent of the melody and improvised for the moment, with the others keeping up their steady "comment" in an undertone. In "Leakin' in the Building," for instance, while the lead sings "Oh, it jes' keeps on a-leakin' in this old building," the others furnish a background of harmony with "a-leakin' in the building and a-leakin' in the building."

*Oh, it jes' keeps on a-leakin' in this old building,  
It jes' keeps a-leakin' in this old building,  
It jes' keeps a-leakin' in this old building,  
I believe I'll have to move,  
I'll find a better home.*

Refrain:

*It's a-leakin' and a-leakin'  
And a-leakin' in de building,  
I believe I'll have to move.*

*My mother found Jesus in this old building,  
My mother found Jesus in this old building,  
My mother found Jesus in this old building,  
I believe she'll have to move,  
She'll find a better home.*

Once, in the absence of their leader, I accompanied them on "The Old Ship of Zion," a spiritual that recalls the voyage of the converted to the promised land. In the midst of the second part, the General suddenly stopped me and said, "You know, Mistuh Owens, the way you sings it sounds all right, but it'd be a heap bettuh if you'd put some breaks in it." He was referring to the syncopation, which they vary to suit their feelings and the occasion, and which I have never been able to analyze into a definite pattern. Some songs they sing fast, some they sing slow, some they vary from fast to slow depending on how they feel at the moment.

"Lead Me On," one of the slow songs, when sung by these Negroes seems to me as deeply fervent as "Lead, Kindly Light":

*Precious Lawd, take my hand,  
Lead me on, let me stand;  
I'm so tired, I am weak, I am worn;  
Through the storm, through the night  
Lead yo' child to the light;  
Take my hand, precious Lawd, lead me on.*

ONE afternoon I was driving up from New Orleans toward Houma when I saw a man standing beside the road with his thumb out. He looked like a local Cajun, so I stopped and picked him up. He told me his name was Stanley Blanchard and that he was on his way to Houma to buy a car part. He had a good car, but it would

not run. During our ride I brought the conversation around to Cajun French songs and asked him if he knew any.

"No," he replied, "I don't . . . but my mama she do."

I found Madame Blanchard at her shotgun house in Bayou Blue. She was probably in her sixties and looked much older. She had on a loose-fitting blue gingham dress and was barefoot. Before greeting me, she went to a rocker



on the front porch, sat down, and tucked her skirt carefully around her bare ankles. I asked Madame Blanchard's daughter, Madame Trosclair, to explain to her mother what I wanted. When Madame Blanchard understood, her eyes brightened and a smile came to her face. Then she began to rock faintly and sang "La Belle Louise," a mournful ballad about the infidelity of a young girl's lover. It was a ballad I had not heard before but one which I was sure could be traced all the way back through the wanderings of the French Canadians from Acadia, and then further back to France itself—persisting over three hundred years of migration, and now remembered only in backwoods sections of the crawfish country. Unfortunately, Cajun French songs do not translate easily into English or classical French.

When she had finished, I explained that I wanted to take Madame Blanchard to Houma and make records of the song. As we rode along a highway lined with elderberry bushes, a Cajun at almost every bush picking the ripe berries, Madame Trosclair, to make conversation, said:

"Did you know the devil was in Houma Monday night?"

I told her I had not heard of it and asked her to tell me more.

"Way, he was at a dance at the American Legion Hall. He was there and he was dancing with a woman. 'Do you know who you dancing with?' he asked. 'No,' she say. 'You dancing with the devil,' he say. 'Let me go,' she say. 'I ain't wantin' to dance with no devil.' 'You cain't go,' he say. 'Let me go,' she say. 'I want to go to my car.' 'If you go to your car, I go with you,' he say. She was so scared she started screaming and the devil run off . . . and everybody else run . . . and there wasn't no more dance, yeah. . . ."

"What was he like?" I asked.



"Like any natural man. You couldn't a told him from nobody else to look at him."

This is a good story, I thought. How Irene Whitfield (author of *Louisiana French Folk Songs*) up at Lafayette would enjoy it; how with her skill with the language she would be able to ferret out each interesting detail.

"Why do you think he came to Houma?" I asked.

"People got so wicked here, I guess," she said. "Drinking and dancing and gambling all the time. It was a good thing for him to come. Ain't no more dances at the American Legion Hall, and the people bain a whole lot better since then. . . ."

At the schoolhouse we set up the recording machine and Madame Blanchard sang again the beautiful "La Belle Louise," and then a dozen more beautiful old French ballads. Madame Trosclair sang "Oh, Way Elanie," a song about a hard-headed girl who drowns because she did not heed her mother's advice, and "Marie Magdalene," a strange story of the love between Mary Magdalene and Jesus.

After leaving them at their house by Bayou Blue I drove on toward Lafayette, eager to tell the devil story to Irene Whitfield. I arrived at her place in the middle of a Sunday afternoon and, hardly waiting to give a greeting, I said:

"The devil was in Houma Monday night."

They burst out laughing.

"That's nothing," they said. "He was right here in Lafayette last night. At the Blue Goose. A Negro dance hall."

When they told me that a colored woman by the name of Marie out in the country could tell us the whole story, I insisted that we go see her. We drove several miles over sandy roads before coming to the little cabin where Marie lived. Marie, broad, fat, and black, was out in the front



yard tending a sick pig in a basket. She had two matchsticks crossed in her hair to keep headaches away. When Irene mentioned the devil, Marie grinned self-consciously and then in a deep rich voice began telling what she knew. Rapidly Irene interpreted her French patois for me.

Toward midnight the night before, the Blue Goose was packed with Negroes enjoying the dance and beer. Suddenly the devil came in wearing a red suit. He carried a

pitchfork and had a long red tail. When the Negroes saw him they jumped through windows, ran, screamed, fainted. They created such a commotion that the white policemen came to investigate. When they "saw" the devil they began firing at him, but he reached out and caught the bullets and threw them right back at the policemen. Marie ran away with the others, but she heard that the devil disappeared into the darkness and had not been heard of since.

These stories of visitations from the devil reminded me of "The Devil's Song," an English ballad I learned when I was a child. In it the devil comes to a farmer plowing in the field and demands one member of his family. The farmer gives him his scolding wife, and the devil takes her off to hell. The scene shifts quickly to hell, with the stanza:

*Six little devils a-dragging their chains,  
Hi hi diddle um day;  
Six little devils a-dragging their chains,  
Saying, "Take her back, Pappy,  
'Fore she beats out our brains. . . ."*

The devil, of course, is forced to take her back to the farmer, who has the final say:

*The old man went whistling across the hill,  
Hi hi diddle um day;  
The old man went whistling across the hill,  
Saying, "If the devil won't have her  
I'll be damned if I will. . . ."*

WHETHER ballad or blues, the folk song is easily adapted to local happenings or current events. In the summer of 1940, I heard of a man called Gray Ghost who was playing piano in a Negro roller rink at Navasota, not far from Houston. With Robert MacGimsey, whose "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego" was already popular, as a companion, I went to the rink, an old cotton warehouse only slightly remodeled. Gray Ghost was hammering out "Louise, She's the Sweetest Girl I Know" in a lazy blues rhythm. A score or so of skaters circled the floor in a sort of shuffle on skates.

Gray Ghost was willing enough to play and sing for recording. He recorded "Louise," and other blues songs, including "Call the Number of the Train I Ride," "The Sun Is Sinking Down," until there was a huge crowd of Negroes milling around us.

"Git him to sing 'The Mo' Brothuhs Blues,'" someone called.

The song interested me immediately. I knew the Moore Brothers had a large cotton plantation on the Brazos River. I suspected a song that would reveal unpleasant details about life on the plantation.

"Do you know it?" I asked.

Gray Ghost shook his head.

"Anybody else know it?" I asked the audience.

"Git Hoss to sing it," they said.

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They pointed to a heavy dark boy sitting on the side. I went over to him and asked him if he knew it. At first he said no. Then he said he was afraid to sing it because of what the Moore Brothers might do to him. Only a week before they had heard a man singing it in a field on the plantation. The man had been whipped with a blacksnake. He had been threatened with a six-shooter if he was ever heard singing it again. "Man," he finished up, "you ain't never gonna git anybody around here to sing that song."

He was right, though I certainly tried hard enough. One stanza was told me by a Negro I picked up on the highway, but there was nothing derogatory in it:

*I likes to work for the Mo' Brothers  
'Cause they feeds so well;  
They feeds jes' lak  
The Rice Hotel.*

Of course, the reference to the hotel could be ironic.

Gray Ghost recorded some boogie-woogie for me.

"How do you play boogie-woogie?" I asked him.

"Well, suh, I'll tell you. You play with yo' lef' hand and let yo' right do whatever it wants to."

Finally he turned to me and said, "You reckon Hitler'd come git me if'n I sing the song I made up about him?"

"What's it called?" I asked.

"The Hitler Blues."

I assured him that he would probably be safe enough and urged him to sing it. This was not long after Italy had entered the war and after Roosevelt's "knife in the back" speech. Gray Ghost had simply given words and music to the talk he heard around him. Before playing the song, he asked me to listen for the sound of machine guns in the accompaniment.

*You can talk about Ribbentrop,  
You ought to a seen him in No-Man's Land;  
He got the wuss ole Hitlerism  
Of any man in the land.*

*He say his air fleet is so powerful,  
Ain't no army can hold the ground;  
But I sez when the good old U.S. comes in  
There won't be no Hitlerism nowheres around.*

*After he's dead and gone,  
There'll be peace in every land;  
But I want to tell you, Mussolina,  
You better do the bes' you can.*

*After he's dead and gone,  
After po' ole Hitler's gone,  
You can jes' say to yo'sef,  
"One more overrated man done dead and gone."*

While the record was being played back, Gray Ghost watched the audience for the effect. When the song was over, those around us said, "Yas, suh. You sho' right. You sho' nuff got it right, Ghos'."

To me he said simply, "I didn't know I had so many harmonies in me. . . ."

Some of these folk songs date back five hundred years; others are as recent as Hitler. Many are as universal as the sun; others as local as "The Sherman Cyclone," a doleful account of the cyclone that roared through Texas in 1897. Some have been filed into beautiful verse and melody by generations of singers; others show the roughness of recent folk composition. Some are as indestructible as time; others will die with the singers that made them. Whatever they are, they reflect the imagination and character of the folk singers who are our modern troubadours.





# The Antelope Doll

HOLLIS ALPERT

THE lights of the amusement park across the Hudson had beckoned to them every night the whole summer long, but it was only in September that George and Simone finally decided to go. And then it was one of those last minute decisions that came about from a certain boredom and dissatisfaction, even with the slow evening walks they usually enjoyed. So there they were on the 125th Street ferry, with the graceful incandescent line made by the lights of the George Washington bridge seeming very near. Then there was the bus ride up the winding road that led to the summit of the Palisades, and George paid their way into the amusement park. That was where Simone saw the stuffed dolls.

She liked the white antelopes best. They were large, elongated to the size of a two-year-old child, and around their narrow woolly necks bright ribbons were tied. Many of the girls were carrying them.

"George," she said. "Where do all the dolls come from?"

Simone's English was fine by now, carrying only the trace of a Paris accent, and that fact heartened George often. It was a sign of something, maybe the hidden will to fit in and become a part of the life here.

"I think they win them," he told her. "It's like roulette."

"Oh, I want one," she said, and he was surprised to see the sudden shining of her eyes. She really did want one.

But this surprise came often, for ever since he had come back from Europe with her (after his spell with the Occupation Forces and the civilian job in Paris) he hadn't been sure about what she was going to want or like, although it had been different in Paris. There, everything they'd done had seemed to please her, and she was always telling him just what things she would want if it were ever possible to have them: the apartment in a certain district, a certain kind of evening dress from Lanvin, the little Italian motor car—although these had all been out of the question.

He knew, of course, that she wasn't very happy here. But that was to be expected at first in one who had been born and lived all her life in Paris, until the taking of

the boat train from the Gare St. Lazare that December morning. He had thought they'd been lucky to find the little apartment on Riverside Drive, but she didn't approve of it much. It was only one room, but it did have a kitchenette, and that was something these days. And her family's apartment in Paris hadn't been much larger, only three rather small rooms. Nor did she like his being away at his job all day, a job she fretted over because it wasn't the thing he wanted to do most. Well, it was only radio repair work, but he had the feeling that eventually it was going to lead to the radio and television design he had in mind.

So he often made the attempt to please her: "Let's take the Staten Island ferry," he'd said once, and the ride there and back on the subway had been long, but she had liked being out in the wide harbor and the view she got of the city. And she'd liked the isolated beach they'd found that day on Long Island. But the musical play he'd bought balcony tickets for had bored her a little, and most of the American movies she'd found dull and witless. Except what surprised him, again, was the way she enjoyed the color cartoons.

"We can try to win one," he said of the dolls. "But wouldn't you like to go on one of the rides?"

For there were the little cars tilting at crazy angles, gyrating frantically, and he was a little excited by it all. It had been a long time since he'd done such things, although he was only in his mid-twenties, and perhaps what he was seeking from it was some sort of release. "I remember," he began, but he didn't say what he remembered, for he saw the expression of distaste on her face.

"No," she said.

"Why not?"

"I don't like those things."

"I want one of the dolls," she said, and there was something petulant, almost child-like in the way she said it.

He took her hand and led her to one of the open stands which displayed the white antelope dolls. "One dime," the man chanted who spun the large numbered wheel by hand.

George changed a dollar into dimes, and he held them

HOLLIS ALPERT originally appeared in the pages of TOMORROW with a war story, "The New World," back in March 1945, when he was doing most of his writing for the United States Army in Paris and, later, Germany. More recently his fiction has been published in The New Yorker, Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle, Harper's, Collier's and Good Housekeeping.

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out to her. Simone took only one, and placed it on one of the numbered squares. She picked twenty-three, her age. He placed one of the dimes on number three. They were in the midst of a small crowd now, as if their coming had attracted others, and they were all filling up the squares with dimes. The attendant spun the wheel. It whirled and then made a rasping noise and slowly clicked to a stop, and it was number seventeen that he called. A girl's voice screamed out: "That's *mine*."

He watched Simone's face as the doll was handed to the girl, who carried it away proudly, with her escort urging her on to something else.

"Try again?" George asked.

She tried again and lost, and then they each tried, until all of the dimes were gone, and the doll hadn't been won.

"We're not lucky," he said, smiling at her as they walked off, and she shrugged.

She finally agreed to go on the Ferris wheel with him, and all through the ride she held to his hand tightly, but when he put his arm around her shoulders he found some unyielding quality in her body and wondered about it. They were wordless as they rose up above the park and saw the wide, dark river and the blaze of Manhattan stretching in an undulating curve, and suddenly he had a sense of challenge filling him and he wondered if she felt it too. But he didn't say anything.

When they were on the ground again he bought applesticks, telling her that he used to like them when he was a



child, that he guessed applesticks were peculiarly American, but she did not finish hers.

They walked some more, and watched the people in the cars of the roller coaster. He asked her if she wanted to try something else, but she didn't. And as he turned to walk with her toward the exit, she looked up at him and said, "George, can't we win one of the dolls?"

"Why do you want one so much?" he asked.

"I like them, they're cute," she said. "Wouldn't it look funny on the bed?"

Suddenly he wanted terribly to get it for her, somehow, and he took her hand again and walked purposefully to the stand where the dolls were prizes. He got some dimes, and placed some on three different numbers, none of which won. He made a sound of exasperation, and met

her solemn stare. It was as though, in some obscure way, he were being tested. So he tried again, and he ~~must~~ have stood there with her through a dozen turnings of the wheel before it occurred to him that he was spending too much money, that it might be actually cheaper to buy a doll for her.

"This is senseless," he said, his voice coming out a little roughly.

She turned her head away from him, with a kind of hopeless air.

"Look," he said, as they walked toward the exit, past the dancing, and the swimming pool with its artificial waterfall. "I'll buy one for you."

"No," she said.

"Why not? You want one, don't you?"

"I wanted it here," she said.

"Oh, now look . . ." he began. But he decided against it, having learned that with some matters it was difficult to reason with her. She got the idea into her head and it had to be just that way, or it wasn't any good.

Her silence, though, made him uncomfortable, and finally he said, "You didn't want me to put any more money into it, did you? I mean, we wasted all that as it is, and you know we need it for things."

"Yes, I know."

Then she looked up at him with a faint smile, and it seemed to him that he saw mockery in it.

"You never win," she said, "you never get anything, do you?"

"Oh, now, say . . ."

"No," she said, shaking her head with a kind of sadness that he couldn't fathom as mocking or real. "You never do. You never will."

"Simone," he said, with an odd, deflated sort of feeling going through him. "What do you mean?"

"You don't win," she said, with a curious certainty. "You don't know how. Do you, George?"

"But who *wants* to, that way?"

"Some people can," she said.

And, as he looked around him, almost wildly, it seemed to him that nearly all the girls and young women on their way out of the park held on to a man's arm with one hand and carried the large doll with the other. They all had black bears, or the woolly dogs, or the white antelopes, and Simone's hands were empty.

"It's just luck," he said, not knowing what else to say.

"No, it isn't," she said, shaking her head again. "Some people can."

"Oh, stop it, Simone."

There was a strange, haunted look in her eyes as she stared at him, and when she spoke there was again the childlike note in her voice. "I don't *like* it here," she said.

"You mean the park?" he said. "I don't either, particularly. That isn't why. . . ."

"Yes, the park," she said, interrupting him.

As he took her hand he noticed how stiff it was to his touch, like a stranger's hand.

# N I G



## A R O U I N F O R

# G A R S O

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# NIGHTLIFE AND DAYLIGHT



HAROLD CLURMAN

I must confess a certain impatience with some folk who take pleasure in the trick patter of a Hank Ladd, or the singing of pretty Carol Bruce whose numbers are thoroughly routine, while shying away from Nancy Walker who is a low-down entertainer of great skill . . . Nancy Walker is brilliant and, if you are squeamish, hard to take. She is as plain as Eleventh Avenue. She has an aggressiveness, a grimy and occasionally pathetic humor that are more representative of New York life than the comedians who attempt to glitter with the patina of the economic upper classes.

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The ultra, ultra of modern American painting, I suppose, is Jackson Pollock. I saw his show last year (at Betty Parsons') and a new one recently in the same place . . . I can't tell whether Pollock has improved or I have, but I found some of the canvases this year attractive as well as interesting.

Pollock's work might be described impressionistically as nervous decoration, a species of chromatic fission. The patterns of paint seem to trace the movements of some explosion the source of which, by the time we see the painting, remains unknown. . . . That is why I speak of "decoration," though a friend of mine thinks Pollock's work might be compared to a toothache in paint or to a junk heap of shattered, aching nerves!

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An evening at the City Center with the Balanchine-Kirstein New York City Ballet Company was a treat due to two of Balanchine's classic ballets: the Tchaikovsky "Serenade" and Bizet's "Symphony in C." The roughness of the *corps de ballet* in "Serenade" could not mitigate the exquisiteness of Balanchine's choreography or the excitement engendered by Marie-Jeanne's dancing. Marie-Jeanne possesses a kind of commanding, robust and sensuous gaiety which she projects through a pure sense of herself as a theatrical personality—a person to be watched with admiration. The "Symphony in C" is sheer exhilaration in its happy youthfulness and mastery.

On the program too was Anthony Tudor's "Time-Table"

## AROUND THE TOWN: INFORMAL

GARSON KANIN's *The Smile of the World* proves the disadvantage of being a successful director-playwright: anything one writes gets produced. One's best friends—in this case the Playwrights Company—won't tell you that what you have written isn't a play—merely dialogue in three acts on a subject that one hasn't assimilated or given a dramatic body. Kanin's talent, in any case, is for a certain wry comedy of a homey (New York) sort. Whatever was he doing anyway hanging around the sanctified halls of the Supreme Court?

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*Along Fifth Avenue* is a good, vulgar show. There is nothing patronizing in saying this: the description designates a legitimate form of entertainment. The *chic* tradition of recent musical comedy usually leads to an empty decorativeness, more closely related to the elegance of night clubs, where one is charged sixty cents for a fifteen cent cigar, than to any genuine gaiety or wit.

The vulgarity of *Along Fifth Avenue* is not offensive because it stems from the life and habit of the Broadway audience that sees it. A sketch about a cheap cafeteria is tough in a way that is basically faithful to its source, and consequently pertains to authentic creation. The hit number of the show, "Irving," is so close to the kind of depressed sidewalk matter-of-factness with which some people discuss their "romances," that one admires its ability to transcend its doggedly anti-glamorous realism by means of an almost vicious funniness.

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danced to Aaron Copland's "Music for the Theatre." It is a rather mild affair with a quaint wistfulness that may seem to foreshadow Robbins' "Fancy Free," but which struck me as rather inappropriate to the saucy cosmopolitanism and secret lament of Copland's score.



*The Shop at Sly Corner* was a murder thriller success in London. It must have been played by a group of excellent character actors in which the English stage abounds. An atmosphere of cozy intimacy, disturbed as if by some awful threat distilled by the fog, must have been created. The direction of the performances was so bad in its Broadway production that the play becomes a hopeless bore within fifteen minutes. The reviewers said as much, but of course credited the director and actors with a good job!



I went to see Jean Arp's sculpture at the Buchholz Gallery with some good friends. I believe they were puzzled and skeptical, but maintained an attitude of forbearance in deference to my job as a critic or, at least, to my longer acquaintance with this kind of "modern stuff." This was dear of them, but I was disturbed nonetheless.

I find it difficult to look at painting or sculpture in the company of friends. It is as if my need to adjust to their rhythm of observation upsets my own, and I find myself observing my friends rather than the painting or sculpture before us. Then again, I have a feeling that I am expected to express an opinion, and while I am preparing to do so, I am actually unable to see anything. The truth is I do not have an opinion while I am looking at a painting; I am unable to formulate a judgment till sometime after I have made contact with the work under observation. To see a painting or a piece of sculpture requires long and uninterrupted concentration on my part, during which time my mind as an instrument for critical evaluation remains virtually blank.

Arp's work is not at all "non-objective." It mingles specific elements—animal and human—and coalesces them into a lyric entity that possesses a fascinating changeability and flow of movement. Arp's work constitutes a special cosmos in which forms of life one had always known to be separate have been fused, as in a dream, or as in some of the legendary art of the ancients. But, whereas the older artists made a centaur on the naturalistic assumption that we know that a horse and a man are two distinct things brought together for imaginative purposes, in Arp's work the marriage of elements is emotionally spontaneous and without any rational brake.

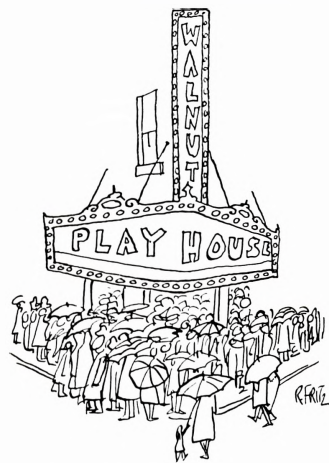


When I hear that a particular Hollywood movie is much better than average—"intelligent," let us say—I invariably hurry to see it. I usually find that it is above

the average, that it has some points of interest or amusement, and that I have to nudge myself a bit to enjoy it.

This is true of *A Letter to Three Wives*, a marital comedy conveying what the movie reviewers call a "lesson." The lesson here is that wives should trust their husbands, avoid trying to change them, and get over the inferiority complex which makes them demand constant assurance from their husbands that they are loved. As a married male, I am perfectly prepared to approve the lesson, but what bothers me about the picture is that its quiet acting two thirds of the time is thoroughly spiritless, that the younger actresses' faces look like those of models in toothpaste ads, that the high-school teacher, whose wife earns about a hundred dollars a week, lives in a home that looks like a model country residence for people with a \$25,000 a year income.

There is a funny piece of business in the latter part of the film (the better part) by which the director or writer tries to suggest the humble background of a girl who lives with her mother and kid sister in a house right off the railway tracks. When the train goes by, the whole house shakes and rattles, as do all its inhabitants, who at such times look as if they had been seized by uncontrollable convulsions. It is a sound comic invention, but when it is employed for the third time, it somehow



becomes ugly and false, and one is repelled by a sense of showman trickiness used at the expense of the people whose lives are supposed to be the object of our sympathy. It is this kind of thing which makes such a picture humanly and hence artistically inferior to a domestic comedy like the Italian *Four Steps in the Clouds*.



When I read the manuscript of *Leaf and Bough* by Joseph Hayes, I thought it a little dated but nonetheless sensitive, as if a Sherwood Anderson boy-and-girl story had been dramatized by a still immature playwright. I thought it a play that merited an unpretentious presenta-



## NIGHTLIFE AND DAYLIGHT

tion in a number of off-Broadway theatres, such as the one in Dallas where *Leaf and Bough* was first done . . . The New York production killed all the play's values. The set was so busy that it took me almost half an hour to adjust to it. By the time I got through observing one side of the stage which represented Midwestern farm life and the other side which exemplified the industrial, and after having tried to appreciate the details of the Thomas Benton-like scene curtain, I had missed almost a whole act. The set, in short, destroyed everything that it contained, but the director—not the designer—must be held responsible.

Valerie Bettis is a young American dancer and choreographer of considerable vitality, attractiveness and talent. She moves well; I might say, excitingly. She has ambition and ideas. Thus far, her work as a choreographer is best when it is simplest, as in her kidding of a tacky danseuse attempting theatrical grandeur beyond her capacity, or in a sort of "subway" romance between two urban kids—one of them a pretty girl named Beverly Bozeman.

When Miss Bettis attacks the problem of making a sort of ballet-pantomime-ballad based on themes from Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, her form falters. The result is inorganic, undigested. Miss Bettis, whose gift is eminently dramatic, strikes me as typical of many American artists, who might be said to display the virtues and defects of being self-educated in an essentially uncultured community. They try too hard, as if they wanted to take the heights by assault and wrest laurels from the muses' hands by force. With basically simple ideas they often come perilously close to creating an impression of being abstruse. But this, I repeat, is the negative side of their earnestness in a world which is, for the most part, cruelly indifferent.



The new Robbins-Blitzstein ballet, "The Guests," done by the New York City Ballet Company misses fire somehow. It is an attempt to accommodate the idea of the tragedy of intolerance (between races, cultures, classes) to the mold of classic ballet. Perhaps Robbins is not at his best in the more abstract ballet forms in which Balanchine excels. I do not affirm this however with any certainty: I should have to see "The Guests" again, and it is to its credit that I shall be glad to.



The English have made another film, *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill*, in the vein of a sensibly direct and gentlemanly realism. It is like an honest account of life in a boys' school by a nice Englishman. Unfortunately the picture lacks artistic personality. Its reticence, which begins as an asset, ends by defeating itself, so that when the picture closes on the tragic death of its central figure we are rather shocked, as if the denouement were a trifle too emphatic for the picture's general tone.

A revival of the Rodgers-Hammerstein musical, *Carousel*, has scored a hit at the City Center. It was always a highly popular show and it is now being given at City Center prices. All reasonably good theatre (and a lot of bad) would still attract mass audiences all over the country if prices were right. . . .

*Carousel* is an idyllic chromo: cute, sentimental and sweet—very well constructed for its purpose. I have never been won over by it, however. It is a good job, but not, I believe, a sincere expression of something felt by its authors—as is the case with *Show Boat*, for example. To be really good, musicals have to be as genuine expressions as any other art forms. That is why the Offenbachs, Strausses, Gilbert and Sullivans are so rare.



Herman Melville's novel *Billy Budd*—a study of good and evil in terms of a sea tale—has been made into a play called *Uniform of Flesh* by two young men, Louis Coxé and R. H. Chapman. The play was done as part of the A.N.T.A.'s Experimental Theatre's invitational series. It is an interesting—better still, an adult—effort. It deserves to be made available to a wider audience. The Experimental Theatre did a more than competent job with it.



John Steinbeck's *Red Pony* has been made into a movie. Perhaps the task was impossible to begin with—there is too little story or overt action—but if it could have been accomplished, it needed a director like John Ford who is a poet rather than Lewis Milestone who is a narrator. Aaron Copland has supplied the picture with a first-class score; I hope it marks his farewell to Americana.



New paintings by Henri Matisse, marked 1947 and 1948, are being shown by Pierre Matisse. These paintings provide us with another burst of color through which the old master (now eighty) asserts his vigor. These paintings are like a late radiation from a glorious sun. Not quite as brilliant or as hysterical as the paintings between 1941 and 1945 but in somewhat the same temper, these canvases are a final flourish of personal pride, and at the same time a testimony to the glory of France. It is as if Matisse were saying, "I am old; and France is poor, sad, divided, but we are both still capable of *shining*."



The first of the two all-American programs given recently by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Dr. Koussevitzky was a disappointment. The gesture of an all-American concert is an admirable one, characteristic of Koussevitzky's impassioned concern with living music. But it is a gesture that fails its purpose, because our large symphony concert audiences suspect that an all-American program *sans* Gershwin is going to bore them.

## T O M O R R O W

They either stay away or make snide remarks about modern—particularly American—music.

The program on this occasion was too long. Concerts should rarely exceed an hour and a half of playing time. The present program read like a telephone directory of American composers. It began promisingly with the vigorous *élan* of William Schuman's "American Festival Overture," and moved through the gentle parlor warmth of Samuel Barber's "Violin Concerto" (played by Ruth Posselt), but by the time it reached what was undoubtedly the most distinguished work on the program, Walter Piston's "Symphony No. 3," at least one listener was too worn out to appreciate it fully.

The second all-American program a few days later was far more successful than the first. It began with David Diamond's genuinely musical "Rounds," and Irving Fine's nervously sensitive and almost scenic "Toccata." After a spell with the grand concert gestures of Howard Hanson's "Piano Concerto" (soloist: Rudolf Firkusny), it proceeded to Roy Harris' impressive "Third Symphony,"

and concluded with Aaron Copland's stirring "Lincoln Portrait."

♦ ♦ ♦

Jean Paul Sartre, the French literary cartel, now comes before us as the scenarist of *The Chips are Down*, a semi-philosophical film, in which the hero and heroine navigate between this world and the next with the greatest of ease. It is all supposed to illustrate something or other; I was not sufficiently interested to find out what. It is a rather dull picture in which the characters are somewhat more lifelike in the next world than in this.

♦ ♦ ♦

Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, produced by New Stages, is one of those beautiful plays that it is almost a sacrilege for American theatre people to touch. The local bottling spoils the savor of this particular Spanish wine. The New Stages just haven't the actors to do Lorca. It is a moot point which is a greater service to art: not to do Lorca at all or to do him with the stranger's touch.

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JOCELYN BROOKE

## THE GARDEN DOOR

(In Memoriam: Clere Parsons, 1908-1930)

Now in this lucid moment,  
This sunlit-summer pause  
Between afternoon and evening,  
With the high glass doors

Open upon the garden,  
And the suave women walking  
Among the rain-wet lilacs,  
And the easy talking—

Now in this knife-edged moment  
I choose to perpetuate  
Your memory, and with hoarded  
Phrases to dedicate

To you this quiet evening,  
With the sunlight weaving  
Blue smoke and sound of music  
Into a net, and cleaving

The tangled knot of thinking;  
Now that the gramophone  
Molds from its potter's wheel  
An august and swelling dome

Of music, and the fabric  
Of smoke and sunlight cages  
Like butterfly this moment  
Which in dark ages

Of stripped and winter future,  
Immobile beneath glass  
Shall please the curious student  
Of a dishonored past.

The glass is falling, falling—  
Brightness falls from the air,  
The clouds sweep up from the river,  
Masking the sunset-glare;

But in this chosen moment  
Of time and our ruined world,  
I have caged this last flame of sunlight,  
And, like a banner furled,

Have stored away in darkness  
For bright and future guerdon,  
The lilacs, the music, and this door  
Opening upon the garden.

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# THE RECORD SHELF



JOHN BRIGGS

IN the record business, it is a dull month when somebody doesn't turn up with an idea for a record-of-the-month club.

Ambitious young boys, with more brains than capital and a praiseworthy desire to turn an honest dollar, pounce on the idea at regular intervals.

Invariably they are gently but firmly discouraged by magnums of the industry. They learn to their chagrin that the idea has already been thought of, and put aside.

"It won't work," a high executive of the industry told one would-be promoter not long ago. "Book publishers are always putting out new books. There's some point in a book club—helps you to keep up with what's coming out. But we just record the same stuff over and over again."

Events may shortly prove both the executive and this department to be bad prophets. For the fact remains that everything in the active repertoire has been recorded, re-recorded, recorded in fancy transcriptions and special arrangements, not once but many times.

This has grave implications for the state of music as a whole. It is bound up with the stagnation that pervades all of music at this moment. However, the problem is a long-range one. It will make itself felt by attrition over an extended period of time.

But in the recording business its repercussions are already being felt. Some record companies employ skilled specialists, known as artist counsels, artist relations consultants, and so forth, a large part of whose time is spent in explaining, in English, French, German, Czech, Bulgarian, Polish and other tongues employed by the polyglot race of musicians, that since the Tchaikovsky "B-Flat Minor Concerto" has already been recorded by Rubinstein,

Horowitz and thirteen other top-ranking pianists, a new version by a very talented and highly original newcomer cannot be released for at least another six months.

It goes without saying that so widely-exploited a work as the Tchaikovsky Concerto would be in great demand among pianists. It is a popular work, and popular works sell briskly. Brisk sales bring fat royalties. Thanks to its Hollywood apotheosis and its vestigial appearance in Tin Pan Alley (the latter some time back having inspired a song, "Everybody's Making Money but Tchaikovsky"), the buying public is intensely aware of Tchaikovsky in B-flat minor.

In somewhat the same way, a work like Schubert's "Serenade" is a fairly obvious thing to put on wax in the interest of royalties. According to the 1948 edition of the Gramophone Shop's definitive Encyclopedia of Recorded Music, there are at present available recordings of the "Serenade" by forty-one singers, singing the work in German, English, Swedish, French and Italian. It can be had in the Liszt transcription, with Serge Rachmaninoff as the pianist, in orchestral arrangements, as a violin solo, and in a version for organ by Dr. Charles M. Courboin.

But a potboiler is one thing; Beethoven's F major "Rasoumovsky Quartet" is another. Beethoven's Op. 59, No. 7 has been recorded at one time or another by nearly every important string quartet. Available in the current catalogue are recorded versions by the Philharmonia, Coolidge, Paganini, Busch, Roth and Lener Quartets. In buying almost any Beethoven quartet, one has his choice of three, four or five recorded performances.

The "Kreutzer Sonata" is on hand as played by Fritz Kreisler, Adolf Busch (with Rudolf Serkin), Yehudi Menuhin (with Hepzibah Menuhin), Erling Block, Szymon Goldberg, Bronislaw Huberman, Emil Telmanyi, Albert Sammons and Jacques Thibaud. George Kulenkampf has recorded the work three times, with three different pianists.

And the "Sonata in C-sharp Minor" ("Moonlight") has been performed by Artur Schnabel, Solomon, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Egon Petri, Vladimir Horowitz, Wilhelm Backhaus, Ignaz Friedman, Rudolf Serkin, Ignace Jan Paderewski, Wilhelm Kempff, Victor Schioler, Paul Baumgartner and Oscar Levant.

Artur Rubinstein has recorded the Tchaikovsky Con-

certo twice, with Dimitri Mitropoulos and the Minneapolis Symphony, and with the London Symphony under John Barbirolli.

Joseph Szigeti has on the currently active list two versions of the Brahms Violin Concerto, one made by him with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the other with the Hallé Orchestra in England. He has made two recordings of the Beethoven Concerto, with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony and the BBC Symphony, with Bruno Walter conducting both performances.

Similar duplications can be found throughout the repertoire. If the list were broadened to include old recordings, now out of print, it would make an impressive total of man-hours spent recording the same material over and over again.

As might be expected the same situation prevails in opera to some extent. "Cavalleria Rusticana" has been recorded three times at La Scala, once with Mascagni conducting. It has also been recorded in French and German, and there are extant seven albums of excerpts, fantasias and "syntheses."

"Pagliacci" has been done twice at La Scala, and once by a German cast headed by Richard Tauber. Five orchestras have recorded excerpts. There are sixteen versions of the Prologue in Italian (including one by the tenor Beniamino Gigli), six in German, eight in French, two in English. "Ridi, Pagliaccio!" has been recorded thirty-three times in Italian, French, German (where it emerges as "*Lache, Bajazzo!*"), Swedish, English and Czech.

It may be objected that all these are standard repertoire items, which never fail to make their mark with listeners. But the same pattern runs through all the literature of music from Bach to Richard Strauss. All have been copiously recorded. The most obvious things have merely been done more frequently.

Chopin's music has been recorded almost *in toto*, despite the fact that the piano is not the ideal instrument for recording purposes. For some reason the piano has given sound engineers a headache since the primitive days of record-making. Nevertheless, Chopin is available, tonal distortions and all, in records made by the giants of the instrument from Paderewski and De Pachmann to Horowitz and Rubinstein. There are no recordings available for the "Polonaise in D Minor," Op. 71, No. 1, or that in F minor, Op. 73, the first piano sonata, some of the songs, or the "La ci darem la mano" Variations for piano and orchestra (concerning which Schumann wrote the famous review beginning, "Hats off, gentlemen—a genius!") Otherwise, the 4 Ballades, 2 Concerti, 24 Etudes and 3 "Nouvelles" Etudes, the 49 opus-numbered Mazurkas, 20 Nocturnes, 24 Preludes, 4 Scherzi, 14 Valses and various single pieces have been recorded once to twenty-one times each.

The staples of orchestral repertoire offer no less variety as to orchestras, conductors and soloists. The nine symphonies of Beethoven, the four symphonies of Brahms,

the usual offerings of Schubert, Schumann, Mozart, Tchaikovsky are the usual grist for the record-makers' mill, their regular procession broken only when someone plays a first performance of a new Haydn symphony which has just been discovered in the archives of the Esterházy palace in Hungary.

That there is no new thing under the sun is most emphatically true of the record industry. The same things appear and reappear under different labels and with different performers.

One is forced to speculate whether it is possible that a saturation point of some sort may eventually be reached. When collectors have built their collections to a definitive bulk, amassing all significant works of all significant masters, what then? Will they go on buying new versions of the same things, to compare the new interpretation with the old? Or will they stop collecting and merely listen to the items already collected?

It is a curious, paradoxical situation, not paralleled outside the world of music. Critics of the theatre are generally acidulous enough when discussing the death of new plays. How could they do justice to their feelings if the present-day repertory began with Shakespeare and ended with Shaw? Literature would be thought in a serious plight if book publishers devoted themselves to reprints of works that appeared between, say, 1710 and 1900.

In music everything goes back to the composer, just as everything in the theatre goes back to the playwright, and everything in literature to the writer. The composer today is in the strange plight of finding it extremely difficult to secure a hearing for his works, while at the same time the demand for new works is keener than ever before.

There are at present a dozen or so first-rate orchestras which make records with some regularity. Artists who are potential soloists with our leading orchestras are also under contract, as a general thing, to make records. There is tremendous activity in record-making. A large repertoire is utilized every season. The frequency with which performers remake things already recorded—in some cases, already recorded by themselves—suggests a sort of clutching at musical straws, for one would hardly go out of his way to supersede his own earlier work unless there were good reason to do so. Yet composers complain with a good deal of justification that their up-to-date, original works are passed over in favor of "safe" works which have sold widely in the past and may be expected to sell again.

It is true that the record makers are, by and large, deficient in the pioneering spirit. But they can hardly afford to be otherwise. Composers find it relatively easy to secure a first hearing in concert (though it is generally inordinately difficult to secure a second). A concert, however, does not stand or fall with the success or failure of a single new work. After the novelty is performed, subscribers can readily be soothed with the familiar splendors of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. In a recorded performance, on the other hand, the new work is on its own.



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The reluctance of record-makers to gamble on anything savors of novelty is another symptom of the growing gap between today's composer and his audience. In almost any other creative activity, the new work's novelty is a part of its appeal. In music it is just the other way around. One wonders, not for the first time, whether our composers have not concentrated on art for art's sake so intensively and over such a long period that they have lost sight of the factor of expediency. This is a state of mind which would find little precedent in the working methods of those composers whose works crowd newcomers off the record shelves. The church cantatas of Bach are objects almost of worship today. This fact would probably astonish the composer. It seems possible that the devout Bach wrote them casually; but he also wrote them rapidly, according to a strict formula, to meet the deadline of a Sunday service. His "Musical Offering" is venerated as a lofty concep-

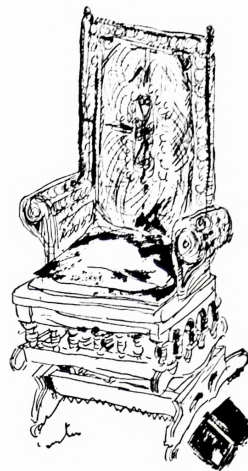
tion, but when he sat down to write it, it seems unlikely that he had in mind any thought more lofty than the hope of getting a job on the basis of the piece.

Mozart, most accommodating of composers, adapted the instrumentation of his symphonies to the resources of the orchestra scheduled to perform it first. Even Beethoven was not above turning out an occasional potboiler like "The Ruins of Athens." In the field of the concerto, musical history is rich in examples of composers who altered and modified their original conception of a work in collaboration with a Joachim or David who was to play the first performance. One wishes some enterprising composer would essay this neglected field by writing a concerto designed to show off the solo instrument. Cello literature is woefully deficient; the soloist has his choice of the Saint-Saëns Concerto or the Schumann Concerto. An enlargement of the repertoire might win one the affection of cellists, if no one else.



# BOOKS

## THE MAN OF LETTERS AND AMERICAN CULTURE



LUDWIG LEWISOHN

**I**F I am to write about such a grave subject as *The Man of Letters and American Culture*, I had better a little define my terms. For the man of letters, who is a man of scruples, who tests his acts as an artist, a thinker, even a citizen, before the interior court of his conscience, hardly exists among us today. A Sinclair Lewis who once wrote two greatly and perhaps permanently effective books and who has been re-writing those two books more feebly and noisily ever since is no man of letters; Pearl Buck who wrote one faintly beautiful book and then plunged down among the crowd of easy entertainers is no woman of letters. I name these two because the Swedish Academy, after its various aberrations, has just, as it were, come to its senses again, and given the Nobel prize to Mr. T. S. Eliot, who is, according to the marks I have proposed, a true man of letters. His precise stature as poet, critic, thinker, is likely to fluctuate for long. But the man who wrote "Ash Wednesday" and sundry other poems, as well as the essays "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and "Religion and Literature," is evidently allied to the great tradition of the man of letters which I have in mind.

It may be useful to examine that tradition for a moment through a few of

its great exemplars. And the figure that first comes to my mind, almost as type and symbol, is that of Milton. The one flawless poetic artist in the tongue we speak, he lost his eyesight in the service of the commonwealth; he descended into the arena to defend the rational liberties, both public and private, of man; he had a powerful and coherent vision of the sum of things that he strove to make to prevail. A certain severity of temper he used in seeking "to justify the ways of God to man," a saying which, rightly interpreted, may be taken as a summing up of both man's and the man of letters' whole business in this world, is still resented by the dilettanti and the dabblers who, as Goethe tells us, "negate the master and try to make mastery appear to be egoism."

This trick of the dilettanti and the dabblers has become more widespread in this age; its almost conspiratorial character in contemporary America abashes spirits of mediocre force and daring who might, in a kinder climate, have been men of letters on a moderate scale. But who among us will answer the dilettanti and the dabblers in the spirit of André Gide's magnificent notation: "*Je ne me savais pas d'abord si redoutable; mais, on me combat, donc*

*je suis.*" ("I did not at first know myself to be so redoubtable; but, they fight me, hence I am.") Who, in our apparently easygoing society, in our apparently almost jolly world of literary trafficking, would not wince at the jibe a reviewer addressed to Thomas Mann the other day? "No writer in this century," the reviewer (to whom I am coming back presently) wrote, "has won such universal admiration and none has felt himself more worthy of it." You get the implication of the sullen dilettante and dabbler. Greatness is "putting on side"; an occasional glimpse of it followed, as the dabbler could not know, by other moments of anguished doubt—this is resented as arrogant detachment from the gay crowd of purveyors of merchandise in the pseudo-literary market places whose ambition was defined and written down forevermore by Jules Lemaitre in his precious execution of the novelist Georges Ohnet. "There is nothing in him that rises above his readers, nothing that shocks or eludes them. His novels are cut to their exact measure; M. Ohnet presents to them their own ideal. The banal cup he holds to their lips they can drink, they can drain it to the last drop." It is the Georges Ohnets among us whom the reviewers relish and really read.



they do read them, in spite of Goethe's wry jest: "Seit man die Bücher recensirt, liest sie kein Mensch ausser den Recensenten, und der auch nur so, wie er will." ("Since book reviewing has come into vogue, nobody reads books any more except the reviewer, and he only after a certain fashion.") But from this very jest of Goethe's you can see that the path of the man of letters was no flowery one in his age and country either.

He, indeed, is a better illustration of the character and temper and function of the man of letters for us than Milton. For Goethe—as Emerson saw with his exquisite clarity of vision—"Goethe is the pivotal man of the old and new times. He shuts up the old, he opens the new." The two thousand poems, the whole of Faust, above all, the richly chronicled and commented experience of the man between earth and sky, are as fresh and pertinent to us as though he were in our very midst. We need not reinterpret him for our day and use. He is the great exemplar of the man of letters in the modern age. As profoundly as Milton, he wanted his art to transform man, to cause his vision of perfection and of the perfect life within the world and the universe to prevail. Mournfully enough, therefore, he wrote to Zelter in 1804: "It is an evil thing in our time that the work of art which should first of all affect the living, finds itself, in so far as it is sound and worthy of eternity, in contradiction to the age, so that the true artist often lives in loneliness and despair, the while he is convinced that men are in search of the very thing he possesses and can communicate." Thus, as he said, sundry of his works did not find an adequate audience, despite his great fame, until more than a decade after their composition: thus, too, he refused to have the second part of Faust published while he lived. For years the dilettanti and dabblers had demanded "another Goethe" of him. Doubtless he did not want to hear the complaint that the second Faust was not a replica of the

first. These difficulties of the great man of letters are never either old or new. Goethe has set them down with great precision. "Each of my books is hostile to the admirers of the preceding one." He said again: "In ten years it will be recognized that the qualities thrown up by a book of mine today, are its

rarest ones." And these difficulties, it will be seen, spring directly from the character of the true man of letters: his scrupulousness as both artist and communicator of truth—if such a division is admissible; his inner research and deepening (*Vertiefung*—*approfondissement*) which makes each new work of his the expression of another and a riper phase of his total being; his determination—unrelated to argument or polemic—to make his vision of the sum of things, "of man and nature and of human life," prevail. Thus, he needs to persuade yet cannot stoop to please. He is immensely willing to yield to the demand of his day, to what Goethe called *die Forderung des Tages*, a phrase which, significantly enough, Thomas Mann has chosen as the title of a volume of his essays. But it is hard for him, when his day, his age, does not make that demand upon him and seems to have no need of him or, what is worse and what, alas, is true of America today, treats him with the malice of self-contempt projected outward or—and this is the lowest depth and the final degradation—sucks him into its swamps and literary morasses, as has happened before our eyes to two men as gifted and truly distinguished once upon a time as Mr. Somerset Maugham and Mr. Aldous Huxley.

Is there great need of adducing other examples of the man of letters? The "format," as Thomas Mann is fond of saying, may vary; the character remains the same amid sharpest variations of mood, form, temper. It remains the same in Swift and Johnson, in Lessing and Voltaire. The nineteenth century offers many examples, though both feebleness and excesses, despite both genius and talent, tend to tarnish purity and fragmentize wholeness. Yet Carlyle was a man of letters, and so was Victor Hugo. Tolstoi was one, though so oddly warped a one in the end. Lesser but more amiable and still unmuted figures abound—Hebbel and Matthew Arnold and Jules Lemaitre. There is no need to multiply names and each student will select those most conformable to his taste and temper. The last quarter of the nineteenth century, moreover, saw the birth of a group of quite pre-eminent examples—of Paul Valéry and André Gide and, above all, of that transcendent artist and noble servant of mankind, Thomas Mann.

American literature, which I deliber-

ately left to the last, started out notably well. We had Emerson, luminous, acute, with a smaller but genuinely Goethian insight into the concrete as well as into the sum of things. We had the shapely prose of Thoreau embodying his cool uncompromising vision. We had, in a later generation, the extraordinary phenomenon of Henry James, an artist not wholly able to live up to his own genius through temperamental defects. But the bleak neglect under which he agonized and the eccentric character of his revival—not by any part, however small, of the nation, but by odd cliques and pseudoesoteric tastes—these are already parts of the dark shadow under which we live. "The literary man in this country," Emerson wrote in his journal in 1836, "has no critic." That brief and laconic oversimplification tells the story of the many succeeding years. It tells the story of our own time. There is no criticism in America. Take that in its broadest sense from literary conversation by fireside or at an inn; there are no critical reviews; there is no valuing public of any extent. There are a few academicians, like ourselves. There are the 900,000 poor "dumb driven cattle" of the Book of the Month Club; there is the vaster herd of the Literary Guild. The rest is silence.

EMERSON'S complaint that the literary man in this country has no critic was uttered two years after Goethe's death. Wordsworth was at the peak of his influence, if not of his power. The French Romantic movement sent forth its rather dazzling rays. Though remote and provincial, America was within this world. There were people, especially in New England, who vibrated to the same strings and so the succeeding years brought forth not only the poems and essays of Emerson but the writings of Thoreau, Poe (who had only then another fifteen years to live) and of Hawthorne. And Emerson and Hawthorne, at least, made their way in their American world. They were able to create the taste by which they were gradually appreciated. The human world in this vast land was small. It has not, perhaps, been sufficiently emphasized that a cultivated and valuing minority functioned not ineffectively between, say, 1830 and the War between the States. It is clear today that Longfellow was a quite minor

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poet. But the immense popularity of even a Longfellow puts to shame an age which has found a substitute for him in Eddie Guest.

Neither Goethe, who entertained high hopes for America, nor Emerson could have foreseen the American cultural scene today. For they could not have foreseen the liberalistic devaluation of values which set in roughly somewhere between 1859 and 1870 and against which only today a few solitary voices are being raised. They could not have foreseen the great and universal doctrine that it is the business of man in society to adapt himself to his environment, to be in no respect different from his fellows, to eschew the critical mood and the critical temper and to limit his effort to change his environment to the multiplication of mechanical gadgets. Least of all could they have foreseen a system of higher education—breached at this hour and, I pray, about to crumble—in which a man, a citizen of the Republic, a member in good standing of the American Association of University Professors, could declare at a faculty meeting of a mighty university that poultry husbandry and the Attic drama were *equivalent* instrumentalities for the higher education of youth. Please mark the word *equivalent* which unblushingly he uttered. In that word he summed up what might well be called the prostitutional element of that liberalism which is no longer libertarianism. Because, according to it, let us not forget, it is heretical not to believe that everything is as good as everything else except two things—efficiency in making money or substituting metal or plastic devices for human effort and human thought.

I need hardly repeat the tale of the bitter and destructive consequences—the lowering of academic standards, the use of the higher education not as a sieve but as a cornucopia; the deeper and deeper intrusion of pre-professional preparation into the arts colleges, as though men were not men needing knowledge of man and God, of beauty and righteousness, of good and of evil, but merely potential robots or machines in the guise of chemists or engineers or business administrators or even physicians. It is a melancholy and a wretched story. But, one may ask, what has it to do with the Man of Letters in American Culture? My answer is—everything.

THE man of letters is primarily the man of values, the valuing man, the man of qualitative distinctions. As an artist he strives after perfection which he may define in sundry ways; as a thinker, as a teacher—and all the great poets and men of letters have been, however indirectly, teachers—he wants his vision of (to borrow the tag that Arnold was so fond of) reason and the will of God to prevail. He may be rebel and innovator and desire to change or transvalue current values. In that case his emphasis on values is even more peremptory. But he cannot function in a society where among the vast majority of so-called literate people a bleak nihilism or denial of values prevails. He finds it increasingly hard, in truth, to account for the tough tenacity of the dull, lightless, miserable leavings of the decayed Enlightenment with that malice against man, which celebrated its final orgy in the Kinsey Report, and with the concept of progress as a multiplication of our present sins and evils. The only way he can account for its attractiveness is by remembering that it is the easiest way. It demands the exercise of neither faith nor reason; it asks for no active virtue; knowing no values, it liberates the lazy from the hardship of choice between the higher and the lower. It reminds him of the phrase of the French shopkeeper to the merely browsing customer: "*Regardez, Monsieur: ça n'engage à rien.*" It obligates people to nothing.

May I adduce quite briefly a few of the component elements of the cultural climate which would suffocate a man of letters, were he to arise among us?

People, especially the liberals, are very glib about the atomic age. They are the contemporaries of atomic fission and reason and react as though they were the contemporaries of Haeckel and Huxley in the darkest nineteenth century. In vain have they been told by Eddington and others that "the stuff of the world is mind-stuff" and that "all knowledge of our environment has entered in the form of messages transmitted along the nerves to the seat of consciousness." They will not learn that the only object of man's direct knowledge is his own soul and that hence there can be no change in the world until there is a change in the soul—in will, vision, temper. Bleakly and foolishly they use the cliché of mysticism

for all such irrefutable reflections and continue on their irresponsible and disastrous way.

I come finally to the great anthropological fraud which, through the so-called social sciences, soaks the minds of broad strata of the pseudoeducated. It was started in America by the late Professor Franz Boas of Columbia, who determined that there should be no peculiar peoples and therefore determined—you see the line of reasoning—that man shall *not* have created his cultures in the image of his soul. I need go no farther than the popular book of his late brilliant pupil, Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*. When I first read her book I thought the first sentence disfigured by a blighting printer's error. It reads: "Anthropology is the study of human beings as creatures of society." "Creatures" seemed to me an obvious misprint for "creators." But the Boas "front" had to be at least ostensibly maintained. On page 253, Miss Benedict, who in her own person had some scruples, wrote: "No civilization has in it any element which in the last analysis is not the contribution of an individual." But she was badly frightened of the truths she could not avoid. What could be more admirable than her comparison of *Gestalt* or configuration of a given culture to a style in art? Her qualms lead her into unconscious humor. "This integration of cultures," she wrote, "is not in the least mystical. It is the same process by which a style in art comes into being and persists." Needless to say, Miss Benedict was thinking of neither Saint Theresa nor of the Zohar, the Book of Light. What do these liberals mean when they use "mystical" in a pejorative sense? I imagine they mean the ultimately inexplicable. But everything is that. Science knows the how, never the why. Man *knows* only the proximate and must grasp the ultimate by faith and vision. What, in this sense, could be more mystical than the character and rise of a style in art?

I come to the crucial point. Miss Benedict polemizes against those few who hold cultures to be created by human groups as the expression of the character of those groups. She calls this the "biological" interpretation. That again is darkest nineteenth century. For biologically men are all alike. They differ in their psychical appetences, habits and reactions. And so Miss Benedict

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"This is no novel." As though they, usually lazy liberals and therefore nihilists, held in their keeping the archetype of the novel and could forbid deviations therefrom. Reviewers of poetry, on the other hand, have abandoned all curbs and intellectual obligations and indulge in a quite private jargon. Most significant of the negation of values is the fact that the same critical vocabulary is applied even in the better periodicals and papers to a serious work of art and to the latest tale in which a handsome



imbecile chases a deep-bosomed wench through the papier-mâché trappings of a former century.

But I want to turn to a perfectly concrete example of all that I have indicated. An example of it in action. It is a review—I have already referred to it—by the top-flight reviewer of the daily edition of the greatest newspaper in America, if not in the world. I will not name his name; I would not wound or even annoy him. As my dear dead friend, that excellent poet, William Elbery Leonard, wrote in one of the driest of his early sonnets—dry, mind you, like sound Burgundy and not like chalk or the stories of the imitators of Ernest Hemingway:

*The man himself could enter at  
my gate,  
Like any stranger, with his dog  
behind.*

It is a book review, then, of which I would speak. And the book reviewed is the last work of the greatest man of letters now alive on earth. It is Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*: "Being the Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkuehn, as narrated by a Friend." It must be nearly a year since a copy of the German text published in Sweden reached me. I have read the book twice in its entirety; I have pondered certain pages again and again. It is indeed, as, with a touch of irony, Dr. Mann wrote me, his "wildest book." It is a dark, apocalyptic book; it is, as Goethe said

of his Faust, incommensurable. It is story and apologue at the same time. It enlarges and transforms the novel as a form of art by what it is. It is tumultuous and strange. It cries and thunders. Why should it not? Did it ever before befall a great artist that he had to write the condemnation of his own people, of his flesh and blood and of all they had been and wrought for a thousand years? For Thomas Mann is not satisfied with denouncing that pact with Satan which the German people made in this century. Toward this pact, he says in effect, this people fared for ten bitter centuries. This event is indeed an event. Underground the foul fires were smoldering. From time to time they were whipped into flames. And even German God-seeking was not guiltless in bringing about the dreadful end, nor German music which Mann rightly, inevitably chooses as the sign and symbol of this people, as the special mark upon the brow of this Cain. And it is no wonder that in the voice of the narrator, the good, kind classicist, Serenus Zeitblom (note his name), the decent, helpless German fascinated all his life by the terrible genius and glittering decadence of Leverkuehn, there whispers and murmurs and weeps a half-choking: "The pity of it . . . the pity of it . . ."

Of all this our cool and pert reviewer shows no consciousness. Did he read—could he read—the melancholy motto from the Inferno with which Thomas Mann strikes a soft prelude: ". . . I, alone, was preparing myself to bear the war both of the journey and the pity, which memory, that errs not, shall relate. O Muses, O high Genius, now help me! O Memory, that hast inscribed what I saw, here will be shown thy nobleness." The book, then, is the story of a hell-faring. Unlike Dante, Thomas Mann did not fare into the hell created by an imagination, however burning, but into a place—a real place—of ineffable horror, misery, crime and satanic sinfulness.

This is the work which came—in a quite inadequate translation, to be sure—to our reviewer's table. Had I been asked to review it even after a whole year's knowledge of it, I would still have begged for some further weeks of study; I would still have wanted, as it were, to fast and pray. Our reviewer, busy, imperturbable, sure that he knows it all, storms forward under full sail, no vestige of shame upon his brow or of humility



within his heart. Thomas Mann, a novelist? "Little of his work," writes our reviewer, "has possessed the ordinary virtues of fiction." One is breathless. Not even *Buddenbrooks*, not even the novelettes from *Tonio Kroeger* and *Tristan* through *Death in Venice* and *Mario and the Magician*? Not even they? But what this reviewer in our immediate cultural climate does not dream is that the great masters do not aim after the "ordinary virtues" exhibited by the mass production of a given genre in a given period. According to this measure, Milton should have been Cowley and, to descend many rungs of the ladder of excellence, Shaw should have been Pinero, and Eugene O'Neill the late Augustus Thomas, and Robert Frost should have been Robert Service. So *Doctor Faustus*, lacking, according to our reviewer, with the rest of Thomas Mann's work, "the ordinary virtues of fiction," is set down by him "as to be called a novel only by the loosest possible use of the term." How, one wonders, does our reviewer define the term—to include *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* and *Remembrance of Things Past*? Perhaps. For these works have a wide acceptance. He was not left alone with them on publication. Nor does he dream that Thomas Mann declared the novel to be in a state of crisis as a form of art many years ago, and that that very intelligent French publisher Bernard Grasset begged, not so long ago, that its neck be wrung. One feels like echoing that wish when one reads the thousandth, may I say Zolaizing novel with its gilded—cheaply gilded—delineation of the working classes and its sociological implication which, once again, obligate the reader to nothing?

But I have not exhausted our reviewer's achievements. He talks of the book's "ponderous, pedantic way," of "imposing, turgid and frequently obscure dissertations" and of "woeful prolixity." Now one does not expect a newspaper reviewer to read Thomas Mann in the original text nor even, a far slighter matter, André Gide. Yet a man who reviews important books in a great paper three or four times a week ought, at least, to be aware of his own limitations and operate, as it were, within them. Translations are notoriously inadequate and the greater the stylist, the more inadequate they are likely to be. I have read an article by an intelligent and modest American who wanted to be told

just how Thomas Mann wrote. He felt that the existing versions were below Mann's reputation as a stylist. Well, this is not the place to characterize that style, inseparable from substance, of course, as soul on earth from body—a perfect incarnation. But it may be said that the adjectives of our reviewer are the most foolish, quite literally so, that could be used. Thomas Mann's style has a high degree of periodicity, far more spontaneous, by the way, than that of Marcel Proust. But this periodicity is directed and controlled by a pervasive and ordered sense of musicality. Nor is that all. Mann is an elegant writer; he has a Latin, an un-German, if you like, a Vergilian tact and taste. The difficult passages, finally—and what writer seeking to interpret this age can fail to be difficult—are rendered supremely attractive by the constant suffusion of the intellectual with the lifeblood of concreteness, the seen, the heard, the felt.

You may say that I am making a great deal of the review of a single mediocre reviewer. Alas, that review is quite typical of the reception which the work of a man of letters receives among us in this age. The review of *Doctor Faustus* in the *New Yorker* magazine, a publication not wholly devoid of literary sensibility, was almost as coarse, as lacking in humility. The man had read the book quite as belligerently, quite as devoid of the "wise passiveness" of Wordsworth's monition, quite as determined (with a kind of inverted snobbishness) to make vulgarity and the *Saturday Evening Post* taste in fiction to prevail. These reviews, let me repeat, are typical; they have been typical for years. They represent a resistance, half conscious and half unconscious, to high power and high distinction. Exceptions to them, like Professor Harry Levin's review of *Doctor Faustus* in the *New York Times*, issue almost invariably and very significantly from academic sources.

Now we may agree with the observation which Matthew Arnold made so long ago (1864) that "the production of great works of literature and art is not at all epochs and under all conditions possible." Our age is one of unexampled moral deterioration, turbulent, confused, devoid of hope and order. And indeed our distinguished spirits in literature are all survivors from another age. André Gide is seventy-nine; Thomas Mann and Robert Frost are seventy-three; even T. S. Eliot is sixty. And so it may be best

for us and most profitable to seek, following Matthew Arnold once again, "to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself." Yet that is what we seem least able to do, in the total absence of serious criticism—pervasive valuing and criticizing—which might create a kinder climate for the man of letters, were he to arise among us.

ON this negative note I would have to end, were it not for one circumstance—the existence of our institutes of higher education. It has been obvious for many years that culture in the United States had practically withdrawn into the academies and was in the hands of a mandarin which did not always sufficiently guard and tend the sacred flame entrusted by destiny to its keeping. Concerning the fact, at least, there can be no doubt. There are no bookshops in our cities. On the French Main Street, even in provincial towns in the *Midi*, there was and is not only an *épicerie*, a *boucherie*, a *herboristerie* but also a *librairie*. Where are our shops? Even the streamlined chains are not bookshops. Ask in them for a classic outside of a current series. Ask for a *book*. All their counters hold are the trade goods, the merchandise of the hour. If a book—it might be a masterpiece—hasn't sold out by inventory time or even before, back it goes to the publisher or jobber. The "trade" knows only ephemeridae.

We have no bookshops. We have no Reviews. Try to sell a critical study of a writer. Try to have it printed for nothing. It can't be done. There is no place. Criticism is confined to reviewing, and I have illustrated the character of nine-tenths of all reviewing. I have not even remarked upon certain more ignominious elements in the practice of reviewing. Nor have we cafés where literary conversation, the most fruitful kind of criticism, can be heard. I know of one—just one. It is on Second Avenue in New York and the conversation is in the Yiddish language. There the new poets are discussed. At publishers' teas or cocktail parties, prices for merchandise are discussed—prices from magazines or film companies. The quips of Bennett Cerf are repeated and relished. There are no *salons*, as there were in Berlin in better days. Goethe's glory was nurtured by Berlin hostesses a hundred and twenty-five years ago and

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Rainer Maria Rilke's in what, but for unspeakable crime and disaster, would seem only a few short years behind us.

We have no bookshops; we have no reviews; we have no salons. We have—what have we as the single instrumentality for the preservation and the passing on of culture and of values? We have the college classroom. We have nothing else. I need not describe how that college classroom has been assaulted through the years and what various forces have battered at it to keep it from its true function as the preserver of culture and of values. The professional pedagogues, the cultivators of teaching-techniques without character or content have battered it; the vocational educationists (most dreadful of all those tribes) have tried to overrun it; so-called progressives have sought to destroy it root and branch; opportunist politicians have clamored for the lowering of standards to the least common denominator of the offspring of their constituents. The monstrous waves of the malicious attempt to destroy quality for the sake of quantity have gone over it. The hatred of the lower for the higher forms of life has been upon its doorstep. The wonder is not that the higher education in America is bruised and sore; the wonder is that it exists. The greater wonder is that the college

teachers have in quite recent years arisen and turned upon the rabble and upon their tormentors and have declared that the eternal humanities are the proper and permanent instrumentalities for the education of youth.

Luckily there exists among the American people a half-pathetic faith in education. A good deal of it is very impure, since it looks upon education merely as a tool of economic and social competition. But it exists. It has grown. It has finally increased our college population to the staggering figure of more than two millions. Of course, a good many of these boys and girls have slipped into college through the too large meshes of a fraudulent net. Thousands of them are not educable in any true sense. Enough and more than enough remain to be persuaded to some measure of disinterestedness, some not wholly superficial sense of the meaning of value, some freedom from the servitude to materialistic superstition, some feeling of responsibility for the culture of their country, some aspiration beyond the collecting of fees and the multiplication of vain devices.

In his beautifully serene old age Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter in which he observed that, as men seemed to be born Aristotelians or Platonists, so they seemed to be born with a leaning to the

rule in a state either of the common people or of the *aristos*, the best. Now these two leanings or policies can, in actual practice, be combined. A democracy needs and uses influences and leaders. The influences and leaders exist; they are active; we have but to regard them to see the enormous function of a humanistic education in America. From those two millions of college students, or from some fraction of them, it is for us to select the *aristos*, the best—the best, not, needless to say, by the test of lineage or property, but by the single pure and ultimate test of God's grace. It is for these best to attempt to refashion the temper of our society, to create gradually an intellectual and spiritual climate in conformity to the true lights which this age has found and to blend with these lights the flame of the torch of the undying tradition of man's spirit. A period of criticism, of clearing the air, of establishing right values, may then ensue, from which one day the poet and the man of letters may arise.

*Ludwig Lewisohn, critic and novelist, is now head of the English Department at Brandeis University. His forthcoming book, Goethe: The Story of a Man, will be published in May by Farrar, Straus.*

**THEODORE DREISER, Apostle of Nature**

by Robert H. Elias

Reviewed by David Davidson

HOW a Hoosier lad of a different sort, born into the humiliations of poverty, ruled over by a German-American father who was a failure and a religious fanatic, and painfully sensitive always to what he liked to call the "inscrutable forces" of life, grew into one of America's great novelists warmly and movingly recounted for us in this biography of Theodore Dreiser.

Tracing Dreiser's career onward from his early successes at high school composition and the rich opportunities offered him for observation as a reporter, Mr. Elias clarifies for us how much he drew for his novels from his own life, including all that his perceptions were

able to tell him about his own rather undisciplined sisters.

As his special task, Mr. Elias has undertaken to investigate the "apparent" contradictions in the thinking of this most metaphysical of American novelists, in the hopes of offering a clue for those "who wish to enter the realm of final judgments." Coming out of his corner fighting, Mr. Elias declares at the outset that "Dreiser cannot be dismissed as a confused genius; he cannot be dismissed as a foggy giant. . ."

No, indeed. But to me the point seems to be simply that Dreiser must be *accepted* as all these—as great in spite of his shortcomings, and perhaps even because of them. The inconsistencies are there all right, and as real as rain or stone. It was almost as though Dreiser, in his living, thinking and writing, had set out deliberately to dem-

onstrate one of his own favorite notions that nothing exists save by the coexistence of its opposite—that, for instance, black has no meaning unless there is also white.

Thus, if Dreiser was insisting on the one hand that we were the helpless and hapless victim of life forces and "chemisms," he was also battling fearlessly as a reformer to try to improve life. If he was denouncing wealth and luxury as built on an immoral base, he was at the same time longing for a goodly share of them for himself, and admiring the strong characters who had managed to surround themselves with fine women, fine horses and fine wines. If on the one hand he was to prove himself an astonishingly able magazine executive, he was capable also of sinking to such a level of ineptitude as to have to support himself as a section

hand on the New York Central Railroad. If on the one hand he was to proclaim to his last breath the sacred individuality of man, he was able also to swallow the brutal regimentation of Stalinism. If he could join the Communist party and follow its dictates all the way down the line to offering apologia for Hitler during the Pact period, he was also to step into a church for Holy Communion and find himself moved to tears by the experience. If he was never to prove himself a good writer, he was to demonstrate from the start that he was a great writer.

Philosophically, what pattern can be found in all this, save a determined, insistent course of inconsistency? In terms of classical mythology, it was as though Dreiser were fluctuating all his life between seeing mankind play the role first of Sisyphus, and, alternately, of Prometheus—doomed, on the one hand, to a heartbreaking labor which could not possibly be brought to fruition; capable, on the other hand, in a bold if tragic way, of snatching the fires of the gods and bringing warmth down to man, and thus achieving—even if the eagles were finally to eat his liver—a kind of cheerless joy. (Sartre, incidentally, seems to me to have based a good part of his entire philosophy on this stirring myth of Prometheus.)

What we have then is a lifelong, metronomic swing of Dreiser from one mood to its opposite, from despair to daring, a kind of vacillation so perfectly expressed in Hamlet's deliberation on "whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles." Wherein Dreiser qualifies Shakespeare's statement is in a doubt that the second course were indeed at all possible. In practice he was of two minds: sometimes yes, and sometimes no. In the end, let us say, he exemplified in himself—and richly—those eternal shifts of mood through which every man goes, sometimes from year to year and sometimes from minute to minute, and which are so poetically, if grimly, expressed in the pattern of manic depressive insanity.

That Dreiser was inconsistent, that he was indeed confused and foggy, seems to me undeniable. What gives real meaning to his confusions was that he suffered them, pursued them and wrote about them entirely in the way of a giant and genius, which is why his

novels continue to this day to have importance for us and why he is still to be reckoned among the handful of really great American novelists. In any event, whatever view one may choose to take of Dreiser's thinking, Mr. Elias has set out the facts for us in a patient and painstaking way that makes his book a must for any future assayers of Dreiser.

Knopf, \$4.00

#### THE LETTERS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edited by John Ward Ostrom  
Reviewed by Victor Rosen

IT is not likely that Poe will ever be ranked among the world's great letter writers. For one thing, he lacked the leisure. Most of his letters were concerned with such practical, everyday matters as trying to borrow a few dollars, selling an article or poem or soliciting material for the various publications which he edited at one time or another. Moreover, like most professional writers, he confined his creative efforts for the most part to writing for publication and had little time or energy left for composing "literary" correspondence. As a consequence, only infrequently does he strike fire in his letters or produce any felicitous, memorable turns of phrase or comments on the contemporary scene.

Two themes dominate the 25-year span covered by this collection: Poe's constant, pressing need for money and his dream of owning and editing his own magazine, because, as he puts it in January 1841, of "an earnest yet natural desire of rendering myself independent—I mean not so much as regards money, as in respect to my literary opinions and conduct. So far I have not only labored solely for the benefit of others (receiving for myself a miserable pittance) but have been forced to model my thoughts at the will of men whose imbecility was evident to all but themselves." Throughout his literary lifetime he was struggling to raise funds, writing friends to obtain prepublication subscriptions, sending out "Prospectuses" and barnstorming about the country in a desperate effort to "sell" his ideas. That he was unsuccessful seems surprising since he was an experienced, able editor and had lifted the circulation of

*Graham's* from 5,000 to 30,000 during the three years of his editorship, a sizeable increase in a period when the total population of the U.S. was only 17,000,000.

For those who still persist in thinking of Poe only as a dreamy-eyed mystic, it might be profitable to read the letters dealing with his problems, plans, difficulties and ideas in connection with the various publications he edited. Here we see a practical, even businesslike Poe, discussing prices, circulation figures, and seeking to obtain "names" to dress up his publication and attract readers. We find him writing almost identical letters to Washington Irving, Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, Fitz-Greene Halleck, James Fenimore Cooper and others, pleading for contributions for a new magazine he was planning in June 1841. "It would be desirable that you agree to furnish one paper each month," he writes them. "We leave terms entirely to your own decision." Realizing the commercial value of what he termed "caste," he was constantly gunning for names. In December 1840, he writes to John P. Kennedy, a minor literary figure of the day, "What I most seriously need in the commencement, is caste for the journal—I need the countenance of those who stand well in the social not less than in the literary world . . . I care not what the article be, nor of what length—what I wish is the weight of your name. Any unused scrap lying by you will fully answer my purpose."

From the evidence of his letters alone, it is safe to conclude that Poe foresaw the tremendous growth of our mass-circulation journalism. In 1844, he discussed the possibilities of magazines in the U.S. in a letter to Charles Anthon: "I perceived that the country from its very constitution could not fail of affording in a few years, a larger proportionate amount of readers than any . . . upon the Earth . . . I perceived that the whole . . . energetic, busy spirit of the age tended . . . to the Magazine literature—to the curt, terse, the well-timed, and the readily diffused, in preference to the old forms of the verbose and ponderous & the inaccessible." During that same year we find him writing James Russell Lowell, outlining a plan for a cooperative publication almost identical with that of the short-lived magazine, '47. "Suppose a dozen of the most active



or influential men of letters in this country," he wrote Lowell on October 28, 1844. "should unite for the purpose of publishing a Magazine of high character. Their names to be kept secret, that their mutual support might be the more effectual. Each member to take a share of the stock at \$100 a share. Each, if required, to furnish one article a month—the work to be sustained altogether by the contributions of the members, or by unpaid contributions from others. As many of the members as possible to be taken from those connected otherwise with the press: a blackball to exclude any one suggested as a member by those already conjoined—this to secure unanimity. . . . The desired number being made up, a meeting might be held, and a constitution framed. . . . an editor should be elected periodically from among the stockholders."

This hope, this dream of owning his own magazine remained an obsession to the day he died. Exactly two months before his mysterious death in Baltimore he was still discussing ways and means. On August 7, 1849, he wrote to Edward H. N. Patterson, a young Illinois newspaper publisher who had offered to back him in a magazine: "I have at length, however, been able to give your propositions full consideration—and I confess that I hesitate. 'To fail' would be ruinous—at least to me; and a \$3 Magazine (however well it might succeed [temporarily] under the guidance of another) would inevitably fail under mine. I could not undertake it *con amore* . . . the mere idea of a '\$3 Magazine' would suggest namby-pambyism and frivolity. Moreover, even with a far more diminished circulation than you suggest, the *profits* of a \$5 work would exceed those of a \$3 one."

Poe's constant, desperate need for money forms a somber, often pathetic counterpoint to the main theme of his literary ambitions. It appears as early as the fifth letter in the present collection, in a letter to his hardheaded, businessman foster father, John Allan, dated March 19, 1827, when Poe was less than eighteen. He writes, "Send me I entreat you some money immediately—as I am in the greatest necessity—if you fail to comply with my request—I tremble for the consequences." Twenty-two years later, on September 18, 1849, we find him writing to Mrs. Maria Clemm, his aunt

and mother-in-law: "My poor Muddy I am still unable to send you even one dollar—but keep up heart—I hope that our troubles are nearly over." Between those two points the reader will discover scores of letters, appealing for loans, for a few dollars for a story or poem, for a government job. Perhaps one of the saddest glimpses afforded by his correspondence is his attempt to sell his short story, *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, to an editor in Boston for \$50 and to one in Baltimore for \$40, only to be turned down by both.

The present edition of Poe's letters is likely to be the definitive one. It is to be regretted, however, that some of the editor's notes were not greatly expanded; for the lay reader, unfamiliar with the facts of Poe's life, some of the matters referred to are likely to be obscure. But, on the whole, this collection represents a notable achievement of scholarship, and students and lovers of Poe must stand deeply in the debt of Professor Ostrom.

Harvard University Press, \$10

#### LETTERS OF MARCEL PROUST

translated and edited, with

notes, by Mina Curtiss

Reviewed by Horace Reynolds

IN one of his last letters, Proust wrote to Sidney Schiff, the translator of the English edition of his *Le Temps Retrouvé*: "Between what a person says and what he extracts by meditation from the depths where the bare spirit lies hidden and veiled, there is a world of difference." That sentence explains the difference in quality between Proust's letters and his famous novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*.

When Proust was writing letters he was *saying*. These letters are the everyday self speaking, and that self was small-minded, given to querulous complaint about health and fulsome praise of correspondent. That everyday self dripped the revolting humility of the secretly proud, the petulant egotism and nervous depression of the neurasthenic. The self of his imaginative life was a self of a different kidney. When Proust was writing his novel, he was looking inward, not outward; the self of his imaginative life was meditating like a master on the findings of the unconscious memory.

To write a good novel, according to

Proust, is to draw reality out of the unconscious, to find in reverie a clarity beyond the muddy findings of the intellect. It is, of course, to do more than that. It is first to understand that reality, and then to arrange it into a coherent structure, to be an architect as well as a seer. Understanding didn't come easy. Proust first perceived the elements in his unconscious without understanding them. "I had as much trouble converting them into something intelligible," he writes, "as if they had been as foreign to the sphere of the intelligence as a motif in music." How meticulously Proust composed his novel is revealed in these letters. The last chapter of the last volume was written immediately after the first chapter of the first volume. That is the gesture of a man who loves plan and order, who takes pleasure in passing the forming finger down every sentence and phrase.

Genius is both ruthless and cunning, and moves in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. Unconsciously the psychosomatic Proust may well have realized that the isolation, which sickness allowed him, conditioned him, as it were, to fish reality out of the pool of the unconscious memory and land it on the bank for the intellect to see and enjoy. He may well have used sickness the way a mystic seeks a favorable time and place for vision or exercises the attention by staring at his navel or concentration on some abstraction of form. By means of his sickness, Proust forelengthened the pathos of distance, attained to a virtuosity in living in the past which ordinarily is only the consolation of the aged. But, where the aged only nod to their dreams, Proust recorded his findings, molding them into a structure. He made creative his escape from the *here and now*.

As one reads these letters, one senses again and again the satisfactions of this arch-escapist in the pleasure of dream. When Paul Souday loses his wife, Proust consoles him with a description of "the blessed miracle by which the memory that causes so much pain is transferred into your gentle companion for all time." Thus had time transferred the at first intolerable pain of the death of Proust's mother into a being who never left him. Thus in the past of the unconscious memory both persons and events are clearer than they were in the present, which



changes so fast we can't keep the images steady. Thus the dream creates the more perfect world for which man hungers, the ideal world, where Proust's mother never leaves his side and Yeats can exchange the tatters of his mortal dress for such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make.

It was this heaven on earth which caused Proust to stop living at the age of thirty-four that he might live those thirty-four years again in reverie, this time with greater clarity and understanding. James Joyce responded to a similar instinct when by detaching himself from Ireland in his twenties, he cut off his life there that he might relive it in his books. It is evident that the two great novels of our time sprang from much the same stance. Both exploit the unconscious memory. Both are the stories of twice-lived lives. Both are the stories of men who were haunted by their mothers' deathbeds.

The editor tells us that the letters in this volume have been selected to provide the reader of *Remembrance of Things Past* with "clues to the development of the personality and the creative processes out of which the novel grew." As such these letters lack the general interest of, let us say, Gide's journals. What Proust here has to say about the Dreyfus case, Ruskin and his translations thereof, music, Whistler—even his reports on the pains of the neurasthenic—all this has little power to capture our interest or enlarge our perceptions. But when Proust admires Hardy's *The Well Beloved* and discovers that Hardy did in that novel something of the same thing he did in *Swann's Way*, we begin to remember and conjecture. When Proust writes Madame Straus that his novel is "a breviary of the joys that can still happen to people who have been denied many of the joys of the human race," we wonder how even its creator can find joy in so dark a picture, one in which all the lines of association run down hill into depression and sadness. When he tells René Blum that in the first volume the characters are "prepared in such a way that what they do in the second is exactly the opposite of what one would expect from the first," he gives us an important special instance of his belief that people seldom appear to be what they are.

In other words, intensely autobiographic novelists like Proust and Joyce, whose life is their work, seldom leave

behind them autobiographical remains which can challenge their novels in interest. One wonders whether Joyce's letters, which are in the process of being collected and edited, will have any more general interest than do Proust's. They can scarcely prove to be better edited. Mrs. Curtiss' notes are models of relevance and clarity, and Mr. Harry Levin's introduction is a very interesting essay on Proust and his work.

Random House, \$5.00

**POEMS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, The First Edition with Preface and Notes by Robert Bridges, edited with additional Poems, Notes, and a Biographical Introduction by W. H. Gardner.**

Reviewed by Babette Deutsch

**T**HERE was good reason to issue a new and thoroughly revised edition of these poems. As the present editor says in his introduction, "Gerard Manley Hopkins died in 1889 and rose again as a living poet in 1918." Yet the resurrection was in no sudden blaze of glory but a slow process, more like the gradual revival of life in frozen limbs. The first edition, brought out by the poet's friend, Robert Bridges, was not exhausted until ten years had gone by. It was only in the thirties that what Dr. Gardner rightly calls the "Hopkins cult" took its rise. Young poets read with kindling enthusiasm and scholars labored to show the full significance of this extraordinary poetry, "the outcome," as Dr. Gardner phrases it, without giving due credit to J. B. Yeats, "of a by no means unfortunate tension between the free *personality* of the artist and the acquired *character* of the Jesuit priest." The publication of Hopkins' letters, journals, essays and sermons was supplemented by several biographical and critical studies, and the shelf of books by and about him is rapidly growing. There is, then, ample material upon which to draw for a fully annotated edition of the poems.

There is also room for it: what was useful in Hopkins' prosodical experiments and semantic innovations has been fairly well absorbed into poetic practice, but the most comprehensive analysis of his performance that we have still leaves something to be desired. Further, the present trend towards a

religious poetry grounded in the romantic rather than in the neo-metaphysical attitude offers interesting material for comparison and contrast with Hopkins' work.

Dr. Gardner recognizes most of the qualities that shine and sing in Hopkins' poetry, but he gives the right reason for admiring the wrong piece, makes an ambiguous distinction between what he calls "the magic of grammar" and "the magic of diction," and does the poet signal disservice by twice affirming him to be equal to Shakespeare. The book is an inclusive one, containing some pieces heretofore available only in the prose volumes, as well as hitherto unpublished verse in Latin and in Welsh (with which the reader unacquainted with that language gets no help) and various verse translations. There are, too, numerous expository notes by the poet and his editors, but they are so presented that even the informed reader, familiar with Hopkins' poems and with the literature about him, is apt to grow dizzy trying to find what he seeks. Dr. Gardner is the author of a book on Hopkins from which he occasionally quotes and to which he also refers the reader now and then. But it is not very helpful to be told: "For the Shakespearean 'underthought' of nos. 65, 69, & 71 see Study I, p. 175 *et seq.*" or "For an exegesis of this poem see Study I, pp. 161-4." In fine, though scrupulous to the point of pedantry, Dr. Gardner has not made the most of his rich opportunity. His book is one of many that should serve the compiler of a Hopkins' anthology. The time seems ripe for a selection from Hopkins' prose as well as his verse, supplied with sufficient notes to aid the common reader, who is likely to be more baffled than delighted by much of what he is offered here.

Oxford University Press, \$3.50

**THE HOUR OF TRUTH**

by David Davidson

Reviewed by Marc Brandel

**D**AVID DAVIDSON'S second novel is like one of those miniatures our grandmothers used to wear on fine silver chains around their necks. It is admirable in its detail, a remarkably accurate portrait and it arouses two main reactions: wonder at its perfection and a kind of illogical regret that so much industry, intelligence and tal-



ent could not have found wider scope.

It is, briefly, the story of a not too successful lawyer, William Harmon (an ex-football player to whom the average woman would instinctively apply the word man in italics) who has slowly been reduced to impotence by the aggressive feminists among whom he has spent his life. The son of a brilliant woman surgeon, Harmon has married a successful architect, who gave up practicing when her earning capacity exceeded his, and is the father of two precocious little girls. When he is defeated in a court case by a woman attorney, the pressures that have been working on him since childhood finally overwhelm him, and he becomes, in Mr. Davidson's not too happy phrase, "a blank cartridge" so far as his manhood is concerned.

The greater part of *The Hour of Truth* deals with Harmon's gradual rehabilitation. To escape his own sense of shame he accepts a job with a wartime mission the U.S. Government is sending to South America partly as a constructive and sincere token of good will and partly as a minor political tactic of global warfare.

Here, in describing his imaginary coastal province, a pesthole from both a medical and social point of view, Mr. Davidson is at his best as a novelist. He shows, too, a fine pitiless wit and economy in his characterizations of Harmon's colleagues on the mission, a group of perennial expatriates ("tropical tramps," they boastfully call themselves) who seek around the circle of the equator a third-rate society where the second-rate can be king. It is perhaps true that all great powers, whether deliberately or not, export their worst human products. It was certainly at one time axiomatic in England that if a young man was fit for nothing he should be dispatched to "the colonies." Mr. Davidson has interestingly approached the question from the subjective point of view. That is, from the point of view of the unfit themselves, who find among the weak and the backward the one society where they feel themselves men, secretly despising each other but masking their contempt in a kind of boisterous male comradeship for the sake of their own self-respect.

In Alba, Harmon meets a girl who represents the exact opposite of the modern American attitude toward wom-

en, that of complete submissiveness, and through her cures at least the physical symptoms of his problem; although it is not until he becomes personally involved in the political chicanery surrounding the mission and is forced by his own integrity to make the stand that will mean the end of his own job that he actually regains his manhood.

As in his previous novel, Mr. Davidson is mainly concerned with this question of personal courage. His "Hour of Truth" is that moment of decision in which a man decides to fight back—regardless of the consequences. To this extent it is difficult to quarrel with the theme of his book. As Hemingway has reiterated, on a more physical level, it is even perhaps only as a result of moments of that kind that a man does feel himself really whole. But in another way *The Hour of Truth* is curiously unresolved. Although there is a suggestion that Harmon on his return will be genuinely capable of loving and respecting his wife again, the fact that his wife and mother have been able to emasculate him in the first place—as, it has been frequently suggested, so many American women are subconsciously intent on emasculating their sons and husbands—remains stated rather than expounded. Is it that somewhere between the aggressive feminism of North American women and the submissiveness of Latin American "chatel" wives there is a social as well as a psychological attitude which represents the true relationship between the sexes? Mr. Davidson does not say.

Random House, \$3.00

**I CAPTURE THE CASTLE**

by **Dodie Smith**

Reviewed by **Richard B. Gehman**

IT had been so long since I had read a modern novel that so completely absorbed me as did *I Capture the Castle* that I had almost begun to feel that possibly reviewing and writing for a living had taken all the fun out of reading, even light reading. The story concerns an impoverished modern English family living in the ruins of a seventeenth-century castle. The father is James Mortmain, a sort of latter-day James Joyce, who has not done a line since his original and brilliant *Jacob Wrestling*, completed ten years before the story

begins. Mortmain's second wife is a beautiful, former artists' model named Topaz (the first wife died eight years before); Topaz likes to go striding about the near-by hills and moors in nothing but hip boots and a slicker (she usually casts off the latter). Then there is Rose, also beautiful, the twenty-one-year-old daughter; Thomas, the fifteen-year-old son; and Stephen, eighteen, a sort of adopted boy whose mother had worked as a servant for the family. Finally, there is Cassandra.

Cassandra is seventeen, and the book is her "journal." ("I intend to capture all our characters and put in conversations," she writes near the beginning, thereby accounting, also, for the rather odd title.) There is a charming innocence about Cassandra, and a solemn, little-girl wisdom, and the combination of the two make the novel a delight all the way through.

The easiest way to drive a prospective reader away from a book one has enjoyed is to quote short passages out of context, but there are some Cassandraisms that I can't resist. In describing the castle, she writes: "The rent is forty pounds a year, which seems little for a commodious castle, but we have only a few acres of land, the country folks think the ruins are a drawback, and there are said to be ghosts—which there are not. (There are some queer things up on the mound, but they never come into the house.)"

Again: "Oh, I'd love the clothes and the wedding. I am not so sure I should like the facts of life, but I have got over the bitter disappointment I felt when I first heard about them, and one obviously has to try them sooner or later."

And again: "She [Topaz] is twenty-nine, and had two husbands before Father (she will never tell us very much about them), but she still looks extraordinarily young. Perhaps that is because her expression is so blank."

And yet again: "I was only expecting bread and margarine for tea, and I don't get as used to margarine as I could wish. I thank Heaven there is no cheaper form of bread than bread."

The story really begins with the arrival of the rightful owners of the castle, the American brothers Simon and Neil Cotton, and their mother. The Americans permit the Mortmains to go on living there, conveniently overlooking the fact that James has long since



stopped paying rent. The daughters and Topaz see in the Americans a chance to be rescued from their poverty, and Rose sets her cap for Simon. Unfortunately, Cassandra falls in love with him.

This is only an outline: it does not include the subsidiary story of James' conversion from inactivity, nor Stephen's boyish love for Cassandra, nor Leda Fox-Cotton's infatuation with Stephen. Nor does it convey the special charm of this novel. Dodie Smith, through the eyes of Cassandra, has done an appealingly expert job in creating characters whom the reader likes instantly, becomes involved with, and wants to know better. She never disappoints: with the possible exception of a conversation between Cassandra and the Vicar (another well-done personage), the book never drags, and there is more suspense, at two or three points, than the materials would seem capable of producing.

There is a Jamesian feeling about the book which is worthy, I think, of a final note. Miss Smith, who is a successful English playwright, has spent some time in America, and her contrasts of the two similar segments of Western culture, through the meeting of the Mortmains and the Cottons, are extremely perceptive. *I Capture the Castle* is a light novel, a romantic novel, but one which, I think, will be re-read, and remembered.

*Little, Brown, \$3.00*

### THE SWISS WITHOUT HALOS

by J. Christopher Herold

Reviewed by Adolph E. Meyer

BOOKS about Switzerland and its culture seem to fall into one of two categories: either they are of a strictly technical nature intended for scholars and specialists, and hence of only slight interest to the layman, or they are oversimplified popular accounts composed in the fatuous vein of Switzerland as a tiny paradise of beautiful scenery, with immaculate towns and villages nestling at the foot of snowclad mountains, a land of yodelers and zither players, of cows and watchmakers, a place where nearly everyone is bilingual, or even trilingual, but where, despite such linguistic diversity, everyone lives in harmony and contentment.

Such is the halo Mr. Herold scrutinizes and which in the course of some 250 pages he successfully demolishes.

In the process of the disintegration, however, there has emerged a body of fact which at times is almost as remarkable as the fiction it has replaced. Thus, while Switzerland has been at peace for a longer time than any of its neighbors—indeed, one might well say longer than most other nations in the world—its history nonetheless is one of the goriest in Europe. Although the Alpine republic is without question a democracy of the first order, a land of the initiative and the referendum, yet it is also a country in which only men may vote, and in which neither the Jesuit order nor the Communist party may legally exist. Capitalistic to the core, the Swiss are among the world's most conservative people; at the same time they have nationalized their railroads, their telegraphic systems and their bus lines. Hydraulic power is under federal control and the government exercises a monopoly in alcohol. The Swiss are probably no more intransigent than any other people; yet their hardheadedness in their business and international dealings is almost a cause for amazement. They did not enter the League of Nations, for example, until they had been specifically exempted from participating in military sanctions as a League member. When, in 1936, economic sanctions were voted against Italy after her assault on Ethiopia, the Swiss managed to free themselves even from this obligation. More recently, the Swiss came into conflict with our State Department over the question of German assets in Switzerland. The United States government insisted that the German holdings amounted to some \$750,000,000. But the Swiss maintained that the figure did not exceed \$250,000,000, and despite all the pressure the United States could muster, Switzerland remained adamant. When an agreement was eventually reached, it was far closer to the Swiss figure than that of the Americans. Although the Swiss are tough-minded, at the same time they have produced some of the world's greatest visionaries, men like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, author of the *Social Contract*, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, father of the modern elementary school, and Henri Dunant, the creator of the Red Cross.

Mr. Herold has written from what social scientists call "the cultural point of view." He has probed every aspect of Swiss civilization which might serve to make the inhabitants of the Helvetian

Republic intelligible to outsiders. A brief but adequate sketch of the country's history serves to make clear the elusive undercurrents of much of Switzerland's contemporary life. There are generous discussions of the contributions of the Swiss to European thought, its art and letters. But it is in the realm of contemporary problems, especially those of economic, industrial and political nature, that Mr. Herold is at his best. Fortunately, a substantial part of his book lies in this domain which he understands so well and which he depicts so lucidly. He is far less fortunate when he enters the educational domain. Indeed, one has the feeling that here he is out of his depth. What he says, for example, about Rousseau is largely what is generally said about him by his enemies; and what he says about Pestalozzi would need considerable qualification to make it acceptable to educational historians. But these shortcomings, while unfortunate, are of no major significance. What is important is that Mr. Herold has written a highly readable and yet very instructive book about a people Americans ought to know much better than they do.

*Columbia University Press, \$3.75*

### THINKING CHRISTIANLY

by W. Burnet Easton, Jr.

Reviewed by Alson J. Smith

ONE opens this little volume from the pen of Professor Easton with a sense of irritation at the smugness of the title, and after reading the author's explanation as to how he came by such an ungainly word as "Christianly," the irritation is tripled. "Christianly," according to the professor, is the opposite of conventionally, or secularly, or the way the herd thinks. "The pregnancy of the phrase," he says, "has been gradually but steadily forcing itself upon me."

This, however, may be all for the best. What the professor really means by *Christianly* is *dogmatically*, and his book is, on the whole, a defense of Protestant conservatism. He raises some important questions—about faith, about eternity, about prayer, and about the age-old paradox of good and evil—but he provides "Christianly" answers that do no more than scratch the surface of the questions, and do that in terms of an outmoded theology. He writes sim-

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## My Favorite Forgotten Book

R E A R D E N C O N N E R

SOMEONE wrote once that adventure is the essence of life. Undoubtedly he was thinking more of the adventures of the spirit and less of the physical excitements of the chase or the exploration or the mad fandango of war. At the same time, sitting in our armchairs before our blazing fires or in some nook in the garden when summer is in its full glory, we like to forget the strains and stresses of normal life and hurtle ourselves, with a cunning author as guide, into a maelstrom of action.

It was in this mood that I first turned to Peter Freuchen's *Eskimo*. As a boy I had reveled in stories of the Frozen North. Nowadays they tell me that this kind of juvenile fiction is unfashionable and that boyhood heroes are go-getting young fellows who wear X-ray spectacles or fly in jet planes. If this is so, then I am glad that my youthful days are over. I dreamed for hours in those days, thirty years ago, of mushing across miles of frozen snow and setting up camp in the teeth of a raging blizzard.

When I was about twelve years of age I saw Robert Flaherty's film, *Nanook of the North*. It enchanted me, because it still left me, for all its authenticity, with something of the picture-book effect. It was a long time before I realized that its authenticity was limited; that Flaherty, despite the artistry of his presentation, had merely scratched the surface of the Eskimo's life. He had presented a pleasant picture, and one relaxed in the comfort of the cinema and marveled at the photography and went home, not much the wiser and in no way moved.

In 1932, when I had outgrown even my Jack London period, I picked up

the book *Eskimo* and began to read it. I was deeply shocked. My shock was not due to Freuchen's revelations of the Eskimo's stark primitiveness, his love of dirt, his facility for exchanging wives as a pastime, his passion for raw food, or his habit of letting white men do what they willed with his women in return for a few nails and some wood . . . but to the realization that every other writer preceding Freuchen had been a fake. Before I had gone fifty pages into this long novel I knew that here, at last, was the real thing, the living truth.

I grew interested in Peter Freuchen and I learned that he was born in Denmark in 1886, that he had studied medicine at the University of Copenhagen and had traveled to Greenland as a meteorologist attached to the Mylius-Erichsen Expedition. In 1910 he joined Knud Rasmussen's trading post in northwest Greenland and there he turned "native." He became immersed in the native life, married an Eskimo woman, and lived the hard Arctic existence for fourteen years before retiring to an island farm in Denmark.

I remember seeing him in the film called *Mala the Magnificent* which was made in the "silent" days from his book *Eskimo*. It was a bad film, because the cinema could not then do justice to his epic, and I doubt very much if it could live up to it even today. Freuchen played the part of a white sea captain, and I recall him as a great figure of a man with a magnificent beard. In the preface to the American edition of *Eskimo*, Rockwell Kent tells how Mrs. Kent admired his beard. "You like it?" Freuchen said, and promptly cut off a chunk and presented it to her.

*Eskimo* is called a novel, and it is so in the sense that it takes an imaginary character, one Mala, and traces his story and the story of his people over many years. But it is like no other novel I have ever read. It towers up among the really great novels because of its fierce truth and sincerity. It is a work at grip with fundamentals all the time. It never lets up, never relaxes for a page. When people suffer in this book they do suffer. You can feel it. You can squirm under it. When they fight and die it is a real and vital experience. The cold wind of the Arctic roars through the book. Hunger gnaws out from it at your very entrails. The teeth of a wolf tear at you, and it is no arm-chair thrill that comes to you, but the stark, horrible fear of death and mutilation that forms the background to the lives of these hardy people.

I doubt if Freuchen knew anything of the technique of novel writing when he sat down to begin his vast work. But technique has no bearing on it whatever. Men have to make plans and to organize their forces to build a sphinx, but nature throws up her crags without plans and defies man to equal their majesty. This book was thrown up in majesty, springing directly from nature. It has a surge and power that must be the envy of a thousand writers. It must have scorched through Freuchen's brain, and perhaps it burned him out. I do not know. Apart from an autobiography, which followed soon after its publication, I have heard nothing more of him.

The autobiography was no better than most books of its kind. It did not smash one over the heart like *Eskimo*. It had, of course, nothing of the creative power. It had a certain simple knowingness about it, as if Freuchen were saying, "You see what a curious fellow I am!" It gave little hint of the inspiration behind *Eskimo*. No doubt Freuchen knew very well that there were many inquisitive people who wanted a sop, and he threw it to them. I read it, and turned back to *Eskimo*, and knew that in the novel was buried the real truth and not in the rambling pages of the life story.

It would be interesting to know what prompted Freuchen to write *Eskimo*. Perhaps he was tired of the picture-book efforts of the past hundred years? But I think there was something more to it than that. I feel that he had never

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ceased to marvel at the supreme courage of the people among whom he had lived for fourteen years, and that behind this lay his amazement at man's terrible struggle for life in the most appalling conditions.

Mala's struggle is a terrible one indeed. When his wife, Iva, is shot, after living for weeks on board a whaling ship with white men, his grief is that of a stricken animal. He wanders, disconsolate and impoverished, over the Melville Peninsula, until he takes another wife and commits murder in the process . . . and is hunted like a wolf by the police. In the second half of the book, Mala is alone and an outcast from his people, living on what he can cap-

ture with his bare hands. In one scene, the most powerful in the book, Mala, almost dead from hunger, fights a wolf, unarmed, kills it, and, opening its jaws, eats its tongue.

Finally comes his reunion with his family and the dreadful journey across the frozen sea, fighting every yard of the way for life itself, only to be deserted in the end by his young wife who clamors so loudly for the embraces of the white whalers.

Mala is a living man. He is crude, passionate, and immensely strong. But he has humor and tenderness in his make-up, and there are times when he is lovable. He is the symbol of man fighting against the overwhelming forces

of nature, against the sudden shifts of life itself, against all that is dark in the world. There is never a thought in his mind about giving up, about calling it a day. He goes on to the end, dogged even when he is wounded and ill. From his rugged body the human spirit shines out like a lamp. We are grateful to him as we close the book. But, in a sense, we never close it, for here is one of those characters who will never be shut away in darkness as long as men have imagination. For through Mala, Freuchen has written the saga of a people, carving it out in agony and love and despair. He has put his heart and soul, his very life's blood into it for the benefit of mankind. I salute him.

## REVIEWS IN BRIEF

**LITERARY HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES**, edited by ROBERT E. SPILLER, WILLARD THORP, THOMAS H. JOHNSON, HENRY SEIDEL CANBY (*Macmillan*, \$20.00). A large and important historical and critical survey, in three volumes, of the development of American literature from its earliest beginnings to the present day. Representing the combined efforts of fifty-five scholars and critics, it attempts, among other things, to trace the impact of European ideas upon a literature that was, from its very beginnings, an expression of a unique combination of circumstances, radically different from anything experienced in the Old World. It considers our literature in all its forms—fiction, poetry, drama, folklore, humor, journals, philosophy, travel, exploration—and in its relation to "the actualities of American life." Altogether, an outstanding work of literary scholarship that can be read and enjoyed by the general reader as well as by the student and scholar.

**DOCTORS OF INFAMY**, *The Story of the Nazi Medical Crime*, by ALEXANDER MITSCHERLICH, M.D. and FRED MIELKE. (Henry Schuman, \$3.00). A fully documented account of the medical crimes committed by Nazi doctors in the name of medical science. The important fact that emerges from the book is that none

of these so-called experiments produced a single new cure or any important medical discoveries. This degradation of the German medical profession, according to Dr. Andrew C. Ivry, who contributes a sober introduction, "was only the logical end result of the racial inequality and of the gradual but finally complete encroachment on the ethics and freedom of medicine by the Nazis. . . ."

**THE WRITTEN WORD**, by GORHAM MUNSON (*Creative Age Press*, \$2.95). This is a sensible, lucid workshop "course" for beginning and journeymen writers, in which the author emphasizes that a contract exists between writer and reader, and that it is the duty of the writer to make his prose readable, fluent, and graceful. Mr. Munson intelligently demonstrates that the writer can attain readability by fitting style to content, and urges the workshop writer to acquaint himself with a variety of literary forms to achieve versatility. The author's advice on vocabulary-building, writing articles, revising and polishing, and how to "catch" a short story is refreshing and pointed. In the last section he offers some useful advice for the marketing of manuscripts. Gorham Munson, a popular magazine and book editor, has given a workshop course on professional writing at New York's New

School for Social Research for almost twenty years.

**POPCORN ON THE GINZA**, by LUCY HERNDON CROCKETT (*Sloane*, \$3.50). Miss Crockett's thesis is that the American occupation of Japan may go down in history as the period of the Great Bewilderment. In what may be described as a long letter to the folks back home, the author deals lightly with such problems as housing, the black market, the food shortage, the infiltration of American customs, and with the inability of Suzuki (the average Japanese) and the American GI to understand each other. Miss Crockett's own bewilderment comes out in several passages, particularly when she severely lectures the Japanese for their "static" and "dehydrated" civilization. "A visitor," she writes, "gets the impression there hasn't been a truly original thought in Japan for five hundred years." Miss Crockett is more understanding, however, when she discusses the impact of democratic ideas on Japanese women and is surprisingly masculine in her approach to the problem of the geisha girl in Japanese society. For the most part, unfortunately, her informal portrait of the Occupation is as light and insubstantial as the popcorn the GI's and American civilian workers munch on Tokyo's main street, the Ginza.

## TOMORROW CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITORS OF TOMORROW:

Your article, "New Facts on FitzGerald and His Rubāiyāt," [January 1949] is one of the best on the subject so far, and a much needed contribution. I have long wished to know more about FitzGerald and I think that Peter de Polnay has done a very good job indeed. But I do not myself think that the "Rubāiyāt" in FitzGerald's version will ever cease to be esteemed, whatever be the religion of the future, for its music of words makes it immortal. My girl read it at the age of fourteen. I am sure she did not enter into its philosophy, but was captivated by its poetry—sad, beautiful and sweet. At the same time we must hope it is not finally true in its hopeless outlook on life, which is its main theme. . . . FitzGerald, himself a poet, improved on Omar. I wonder if he agreed with his sad outlook, and, if so, was able to feel sympathy with Omar's sadness and melancholy. If a man has no future beyond this life, then no one can fall out with Omar but only feel with him. Whatever the future of religion may be, it cannot ignore the disabilities of human life as seen in this great poem. . . . The early Christians certainly had belief. It was that certainty of a future happy life that made them often court martyrdom. Could we be convinced of eternal evolution, then we, like the Christians, could live much more happily. . . .

W. J. FARMER

Helston, Cornwall, England

TO THE EDITORS OF TOMORROW:

Your article, "Free-Lance Writing Is Risky," in the January TOMORROW, was a most enjoyable and brilliant piece of writing, one full of common sense, humor and pungency. May I congratulate you upon it?

Unfortunately, this article contained one error, insofar as I am concerned, personally. It speaks of "starving writers," and their "dismally unhappy" formative years, and their struggle for any kind of recognition whatsoever. It implies that most writers endure this prolonged torture, "except in isolated cases of pure luck (as those of Margaret Mitchell, Taylor Caldwell, and Betty MacDonald).

I really don't know where the author procured the information that I am the happy recipient of "pure luck." Recently someone said to another successful writer: "How lucky you are, Mr.—!" He replied coldly: "Not luck, Madam. Reward." In my own case, I can only say that I was not even "lucky" enough to be a free-lance writer, or have anything at all published until I was thirty-eight years old, in 1938. Before that, I had written literally hundreds of novels, biographies, prose poems, plays,

short stories, articles, etc., etc. My works went the rounds of all publishers and magazines for over twenty years. From the age of fifteen to thirty-one, I earned my own living, at most miserable wages, first in a factory and then as a stenographer. For thirteen of those years I supported a family, on less than \$24.00 a week, and in times of high food prices and high rents. How I did it I simply don't know. Of course, I could permit myself only one meal a day. I worked seven days a week, but still I couldn't earn enough to feed myself after I had fed my family. I could tell you a sordid tale of hunger, malnutrition resulting in three months in a free hospital, endless work, cold, homelessness, illness, discouragement, despair, and general misery. During all this time I wrote endlessly; I attended school at night. I deprived myself of food for stamps for my manuscripts. For three years, I wrote on an ancient typewriter with a double bank of keys, purchased for \$4.00—the price of a pair of shoes I badly needed. But the memory of all this real and personal suffering does nothing to bring me pleasure, even now. I can only say that my health is permanently ruined, and my outlook on life permanently somber and depressed, because of those years of wretchedness.

In 1935 I began a novel, *Dynasty of Death*. It took me over three years to complete it. It was published in 1938. But its publication brought me no real delight. I had endured too much. Since then, I have had eleven novels published, all best sellers. But hope had been delayed too long. There is little heart in me now for anything. My deepest pleasure is to try to alleviate the sufferings of others. For instance, 80 per cent of my royalties received from my publisher in 1948 has gone to charity.

Incidentally, though my books were allegedly "best sellers," I really made no large sum of money at all until the publication of *This Side of Innocence* in 1946. During the war years, when so many writers made considerable money, I averaged \$7,000 a year. My first "strike," as I said, was in 1946. And then the income tax stepped in, and you can probably guess the rest. And I don't have to tell you how the book business is now! (I might add that the \$7,000 a year was considerably cut by income tax.)

Most best-selling writers have had a movie or two. I haven't had a single one. Hollywood, as you know, is standing at the Wailing Wall, so all hopes I have had for a sale have "gone with the wind."

Mr. Kenyon is right in his scornful remarks about public delusions as to the incomes and the "glamorous" lives of writers. He is even more right when he says that

non-writers are convinced that writing is "easy." Only we writers know of the agony and frustration and despair which are part of writing, and the terror of the publication day. No one but writers understands that writing is a torturous business, and productive of very meager rewards in general. One of my daughters has airily announced that she "thinks" she'll "go in" for writing. I suggested she get herself a job as a domestic instead. At least, she'll eat, and there won't be a leaky roof over her head, and she won't have to go hungry in order to buy paper and a typewriter and stamps. Moreover, she won't have to spend countless hours in the public libraries, after a day's work, poring over research, making reams of notes, and then stagger home to a cold room with a broken window. She won't spend the hours of sleep pounding on a typewriter, then snatch two or three hours of rest before getting up to begin the hopeless round of work again. She won't end up in a public hospital with a violent anemia.

We need more such articles like yours, to debunk the "profession" of writing. Perhaps, if we had such articles in quantity, ardent young would-be writers would get something more substantial in the way of a job, like truck driving, domestic work, working on an assembly line, or selling in a big shop. After all, eating has its merits, and a bed with blankets can be sheer bliss. And don't I know it!

Again, I congratulate you on publishing a frank and splendid piece of work.

TAYLOR CALDWELL

Eggertsville, New York

TO THE EDITORS OF TOMORROW:

In my article, "Free Lance Writing is Risky," in the January TOMORROW, this sentence appears:

"Except in isolated cases of pure luck (as those of Margaret Mitchell, Taylor Caldwell and Betty MacDonald, to mention only three), young writers usually have difficulties beyond belief."

In the case of Miss Caldwell, at least, this cavalier dismissal was not based on fact, and I should like to make amends for it here.

In the above letter from Miss Caldwell, which you have kindly called to my attention, she makes it abundantly clear that the success of her eleven novels is obviously not based upon luck but upon hard work and dedication to craft. I should have made it my business to find this out before I included her name, and I can only hope that she, a kind and gracious lady, will accept this apology.

M. SCOTT KENYON

New York, New York



# TOMORROW MAGAZINE

takes pleasure in announcing the  
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*The Round Giant*

By CALVIN KENTFIELD

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, IOWA CITY, IOWA

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The judges were the editors of TOMORROW magazine and the editors of Creative Age Press. The first-prize story will appear in the May issue of TOMORROW, and the second-prize story will appear in the June issue.

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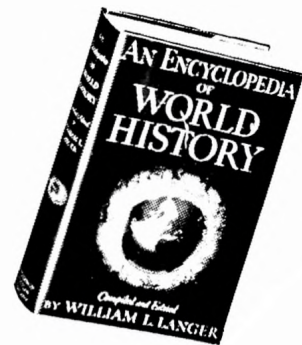
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