

ters; it is extremely self-conscious and it is beginning to be ridiculous.

What ails it, as I hint, is that it has run out of ideas. The older men in it, e.g., Masters, Sandburg and Ben Hecht, either repeat what they have already said or descend to platitudes and worse. Masters, having written the most honest, the most eloquent and altogether the most important long poem ever done in America, now devotes himself to indignant and unconvincing novels. Sandburg, a true primitive, having got the harsh, sweaty drama of the prairie and the packing-house into lines as bold and musical as those of a Negro spiritual, now writes fairy tales that decline steadily in charm, entertains the hinds in fresh-water colleges with banjo-music, and heads tragically into the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Hecht, having marked out the American Philistine for his victim, now writes blood-tub melodramas to divert that Philistine on Sunday afternoons. As for the youngsters, who are they and what have they done? They have talked a great deal, but they have written nothing. Anderson I pass over as one who has escaped, as Dreiser escaped before him. Greenwich Village, I believe, has done him some damage, but had he remained in Chicago he would have suffered damage far worse.

What a change in a few short years! Once a battleground; now a parade of literary Elks! I find on page 84 of Mr. Hansen's programme of the show a very ironical indication of the extent to which even the Middle West has begun to fall away from the Concord on the lake. He is describing a visit to Sandburg, and Sandburg is showing some of the letters received from his customers. "This," he says, "is from a chap in Grinnell College—on the faculty there, and let me tell you, *they are up and coming there.*" Some time ago an American magazine printed a novelette obviously dealing with Grinnell College, called "A Part of the Institution." The author was Ruth Suckow, of Iowa, but

most assuredly not of Chicago. Read it, and you will find out just how up and just how coming Grinnell really is.

H. L. M.

Origins of the Revolution

REVOLUTIONARY NEW ENGLAND, 1681-1776,
by James Truslow Adams. Boston: *The Atlantic Monthly Press.*

THIS is the second volume of a work that should constitute, when it is completed, a contribution to American history of the very first consideration. For the first time a serious and painstaking effort is made to disentangle the whole history of the New England colonies from the mass of sentimental legends that has surrounded it, and to present it objectively and with some approach to scientific accuracy. The result, of course, is an almost complete recasting of the familiar story; the record of the causes which brought on the Revolution becomes itself revolutionary. The tyrant king and the brave and altruistic patriots both depart. In place of them we have two sets of antagonists, and neither, alas, of the highest virtue. On the one hand, there is the battle between English traders and American traders—each seeking advantages, fair or foul; each eager to profit at the cost of the other. On the other hand, there is the battle between the rich men among the colonists—chiefly traders, but sometimes landowners—and the great masses of the dispossessed. How the two struggles eventually merged into one—how the rich colonists, by playing upon the credulities and sentimentalities of their propertyless brothers, finally managed to present a united and formidable front to the City of London and the British *raj*—this is the story that Mr. Adams tells.

It is told simply, clearly, without much rhetorical ornament, and yet always with a great deal of charm. Despite the immense mass of material digested, there is never any obscurity. Effects follow causes in logical chains. There is always room in the closely-packed narrative for touches of the picturesque, small sketches of char-

acter, even some sly humor. The book, no doubt, will strike more than one reader as pro-English—almost, at times, as a piece of special pleading for Parliament and the Lords of Trade. But it is actually nothing of the kind. It is simply history with the varnish knocked off—and inasmuch as most of the varnish was on the heroes of the school-books, the net effect is inevitably that of whitewashing some of the villains.

That such works should be appearing in the United States in the face of a formidable Fundamentalist movement in history, with laws getting upon the statute-books making the most absurd legends official and impeccable—this is surely something to cheer the despairing heart. One hopes only that, as the historians of the new school finish with the Revolution and come closer and closer to current times, they will not collide with the New Patriotism, and so find themselves in jail. The years 1860-1875, done as realistically as Mr. Adams has done 1681-1776, would make a chronicle at least twice as startling as the present one, and the years 1914-1923—but here, perhaps, we approach the limits of the lawfully thinkable!

W. F. ROBINSON

The Case of Luther

LUTHER NICHOLS, by Mary S. Watts. New York: The Macmillan Company.

UNPERTURBED by the ballyhooing at other and more pretentious booths, Mrs. Watts continues to do business at the old stand. Her goods are of the reliable variety—nothing flashy, you understand, but free from shoddy, and guaranteed to wear well.

In "Luther Nichols" she deals once more with the Hinterland. Luther is a country lout, poorly educated but good-looking, who, coming to a mid-western town in search of his fortune, drifts into the employ of a garage, as he might have become a hostler twenty years earlier. Then comes the war, and his friend, Roy McArdle, an inarticulate bumpkin, is

drafted and leaves his gum-chewing fiancée in the care of Luther. She hankers after the good-looking chauffeur, but is restrained by the chastity of her class. Then Luther himself is drafted, and ordered to the front. The night before he leaves he and Roy's fiancée get married as a pleasant way to spend the evening, and the next morning wake up to the noise of the Armistice. So they settle down to an unexciting conjugality.

The second part of the book deals with the vamping of Luther by the blonde daughter of a *nouveau riche* family, whose chauffeur he becomes. At last she corners him in a roadhouse, but her stodgy brother conveniently blunders in. Luther is discharged, and the story really ends with him slinking away from the great house. But the author has tacked on a chapter. There is a scene at a club, a crash outside, and the bridge-players, running out, find a rum-running automobile smashed. Luther is unhurt, but his friend Roy is killed. So we have a happy ending after all. Luther, we hear, has rehabilitated himself. With his good looks and his luck (shown by his escape in the accident), he must go on inevitably to social and economic success. We leave him feeling that all will be well.

Unluckily, Mrs. Watts has set the stage for a comedy of manners which doesn't quite come off. The amorous young lady dallies with Luther in a lonely country lane—and her brother walks around the corner. She sits in his lap before a dying fire in a deserted library late at night—and we hear the brother's latch-key. Worse, Mrs. Watts has yielded to the temptation to moralize. Not quite at her ease in this, she speaks through the mouths of her characters, themselves apologizing. Just what moral she wishes to point is a trifle vague even at the end. Apparently, that things are different since the war, and that the classes show a regrettable tendency to mingle. This is bad; one must keep the servants below stairs.

JOHN E. LIND