

# BOOKS

by Charles Angoff

Heywood Broun

*IT SEEMS TO ME, 1925-1935, by Heywood Broun. \$2.50. Harcourt, Brace & Company: New York.*

THE 106 pieces here were culled from Mr. Broun's writings in the old *World*, the *Nation*, the *Telegram*, and the *World-Telegram*. The selecting was largely done by Alexander Crosby. He might have included more of Mr. Broun's recent writings on the New Deal, but on the whole the present volume represents the cream of Mr. Broun's writing during the past ten years.

The depression has been very cruel to many of the writing folk who were in the public eye in the middle twenties. It has made them seem irrelevant. Cabell, Hergesheimer, Cather—their very names now sound almost mythological. The depression has been even harder upon the daily columnists. The collapse of F. P. A.'s column is a dramatic case in point. In 1925 his banalities and cheap turns of phrase were the chief stock-in-trade of all the bad writers and all the brazen young women. Today he is a mere legend, like Irvin S. Cobb.

But Broun is different. He is now more widely read than ever before. The reason for this is very simple. He has kept up with the changing world, and during the past two years, when he has been so active in the American Newspaper Guild, he has helped change it within his own sphere of influence. His knowledge of public affairs and of literature is frequently embarrassing, but he has an almost unfailing instinct for the right side of major social issues and personalities, and when his moral sense is moved powerfully he can write in the manner of a revolutionary pamphleteer.

His piece on Sacco and Vanzetti, published in the *World* for August 5, 1927, will long remain memorable for the magnificence of its sheer sense of social wrong. "We are the dead, and in us there is not feeling nor imagination nor the terrible torment of lust for justice. . . . Popular government, as far as the eye can see, is always going to be administered by the Thayers and Fullers. . . . A cry should go up from many million voices. . . . We have a right to beat against tight minds with our fists and shout a word into the ears of the old men. We want to know, we will know—'Why?'"

The history of American journalism has very little to show as stirring as this. Neither has it much to show as full of sound feeling as Broun's obituary on Eugene V. Debs, or his defense of the underpaid scrubwomen at Harvard with its accompanying denunciation of former President Lowell, or his onslaught upon the strikebreaker as "an anti-social member of the community," or his superb plea for greater sense in our dealings with agitators, or his beautiful sneer at Bishop Manning, the uptown St. Paul in a silk hat. He is at his best when confronting a simple case of flagrant social injustice, which is to say, when his moral sense is outraged.

He seldom understands the deeper political and economic implications of affairs, and as a result he generally goes far astray in his comments upon temporarily belligerent liberals. He was thus an easy mark for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Justice Holmes and Brandeis. He has changed his mind recently about all three, but his change of mind is no guarantee that he will not fall for their kind in the future. At bottom Broun is little more than an amateur radical. His heart is big and sound, but his head is full of echo-wisdom.

His excursions into the fields of literature and the whimsical essay often make sad reading. He thinks that William Bolitho was "the most brilliant journalist of our time," whereas he was no more than a miasma of verbose unintelligibility. Bellamy was "America's most authentic prophet," a characterization which either means nothing or is obviously absurd. Of Rudyard Kipling, Broun has said: "Of all living authors his chances of survival is the best."

Daily columning is a very difficult job, and one must forgive a lot of coasting, but some banalities are inexcusable at all times. After all, it is not quite news that "marriage must always remain among the extra hazardous risks," that "the true business of education is to . . . let reality flourish in light and air," that "eggs are not a simple dish," and that "neither ice nor fires nor floods have checked the succession of human kind." And the remark that "the crane is mightier than the Crain [the Tammany district attorney] and much more stalwart" is a rank sophomorphism.

But despite all his defects in learning, insight, and English prose style Broun's influence has been mainly for the good. In intellectual grasp he is but a few steps superior to his readers, which explains his hold on them. He speaks their language. He can't tell them much as to how the world is run, but he can tell them a great deal as to how they should feel about the major frauds who manage public affairs and especially about the outstanding victims of the perennial crime of plutocratic government. This is a very great power in a democracy whose electorate is notoriously swayed more by emotion than by theory, and whose journalistic theorists have nothing better to show than the burps of Walter Lippmann.

## The Dream of a Free Press

*FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, by George Seldes. \$2.75. The Bobbs-Merrill Company: New York.*

THIS is easily Mr. Seldes's most satisfactory book since his "You Can't Print That." He knows what he is writing about, and there is a healthy passion in his manner of presentation, which is more than could be said for his previous two books on the Vatican and on the munitions industry. His conclusion is that though "we have had a very few liberal, fearless newspapers, we have never had a free press." In support of this he offers a mass of evidence from his own vast and varied journalistic experience.

His chapters on the flagrant suppression of the news by advertisers is excellent, as is his detailed examination of what the food and drug people did to the Tugwell Bill. The same can be said about his chapter on "The Utilities Corrupt Press and Public," as well

as about his chapters on "The Poisoned Springs of World News" and "Free Press Vs. Free Labor." Finally, there are his devastating analyses of the Associated Press, the New York Times, and William Randolph Hearst.

Mr. Seldes, unfortunately, is not a first-rate writer, and so his volume suffers from some very jerky English and a considerable haziness of fundamental journalistic philosophy. Moreover, he is not always as critical as he should be of prominent newspaper men and newspapers. He should know that the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Jewish Daily Forward* are rapidly sinking to the level of the Hearst press, and that the Scripps-Howard papers are more opportunistic than liberal and more whimsical than vigorous.

All this merely means that Mr. Seldes is not a philosopher, which he probably does not pretend to be. He is, on the whole, a good reporter with an intense interest in the ethics of his profession. He has gathered a large amount of useful information, much of it fresh, in his present book, and it deserves a wide reading. It is published at an ideal time, for probably never before in American history have the people been so distrustful of their press. If his book helps to confirm their distrust, it will have performed a good service.

William Allen White recently said that American journalism used to be "a noble calling; now it is an 8% investment and an industry." No one can deny the accuracy of this remark, except for the first clause. American journalism was never a noble calling; it was always a big business. The past differed from the present only in its greater number of able and courageous editors and reporters. But even the great Dana of the *Sun* did not always live up to the letter and spirit of his excellent principle: "What the good Lord lets happen I am not ashamed to print in my paper."

## More Blah for the Poor Student

*A STUDY OF THE SHORT STORY, by Henry Seidel Canby & Alfred Dashiell. \$2. Henry Holt & Company: New York.*

THIS book was first issued in 1913 and is now published in revised form. Some new contemporary pieces have been added to the section of "Illustrative Short Stories." The authors have also brought the history of the short story up to date. The anthological part of the book will be useful to students, but the historico-critical part leaves much to be desired. I doubt whether intelligent critics will agree that "the most influential and, in many respects, the greatest of nineteenth century writers of the short story has been Rudyard Kipling." I doubt whether there is any truth whatever in the distinctions that Dreiser is objective while Anderson is subjective, and that "where Dreiser shows only a vast pity for humanity, Anderson reveals hope for the creation of a better life." And of what help is it to the student to tell him that a short story generally has "a beginning, a middle, and an end," and that it usually deals with "the life of man, or a group of men, or the important details of that life"? The lowly state of the study of literature in American colleges, I'm afraid, will not be raised very much by the present volume.

## OF NOTHING AND THE WOLFE

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chaos, in a thousand little sleeping towns built across the land (O my America! O my!) I have pursued my soul's desire, looking for a stone, a leaf, a door we never found, feeling my Faustian life intolerably in my ent- trails. I have quivered a thousand times in sensual terror and ecstatic joy as the 5:07 pulled in. I have felt a wild and mournful sorrow at the thought, the wonderful thought, that everything I have seen and known (and have I not known and seen all that is to be seen and known upon this dark, brooding continent?) has come out of my own life, is indeed I, or me, the youth eternal, many- visaged and many-volumed.

"Whatever it may be, I have sought it through my kaleidoscopic days and velvet-and duvetyn-breasted nights, and, in my dark, il- limitable madness, in my insatiate and huge unrest, in my appalling and obscene fancies, in my haunting and lonely memories (for we are all lonely), in my grotesque, abominable and frenzied prodigalities, I have always cried aloud—"

"Whoo-oops," gargled, snorted and snuffled Aunt Liz from out her dream of time.

"What is it that we know so well and can- not speak?" continued the youth, striding a thousand strides across a hundred floors. "What is it that we speak so well and can- not know? Why this ceaseless pullulation stirring in my branching veins, not to be stilled even by the white small bite and tiger- ish clasp of secret women, of whom I have had one thousand in round figures? Whence the savagery, the hunger and the fear? I have sought the answer in four hundred and twelve libraries, including the Mercantile, the 42nd Street Public, the Muhlenberg Branch, and the Brooklyn—ah, Brooklyn, vast, mys- terious, and never-to-be forgotten Brooklyn and its congeries of swarming, unfathomable life, O Brooklyn! I have read in ten years at least 20,000 books, devouring them twelve hours a day, no holidays, 400 pages to a book, or in other words,—and I am furiously fond of other words—I have read 33 pages a min- ute, or a page every two seconds. Yet during this very same period I managed with ease to prowl ten thousand wintry, barren and ac- cursed streets, to lie, you recollect, with one thousand women, and take any number of train-trips (Oh! the dark earth stroking fore- ever past the huge projectile!) This is it to be a Gant! Questing my destiny lying ever be- fore me, I have been life's beauty-drunken lover, and kept women and notebooks in a hundred cities, yet have I never found the door or turned the knob or slipped the bolt or torn off the leaf or crossed the road or climbed the fence. I have seen fury riding in the mountains, but who will show me the door?"

At this point Aunt Liz, with broad, placid, harmonious strokes, swam up out of her dream of time, and, uttering no word, arose from her chair. Out of her dark pocket, pursing characteristically her underlip, she drew a Key and with it opened, at the back of the room, a Door. The youth followed her within. Before him stretched, extended and was a combined and compacted pantry,

provision-chamber, larder, storage-cellar and ice-house.

From the ceiling hung fitches of bacon, strings of onions, and festoons of confetti. On the walls hung and depended the carcasses and bodies of rabbits, hares, sheep, lambs, chamois and gazelles. On smaller hooks and on shelves were stored partridges, grouse, plovers, geese, turkeys, pheasants, snipe, cap-ercaillie, royal bustards, and three penguins designed by Walt Disney. On the floor at the rear lay sadly a small whale. Ranged on shelves were seasonings and condiments—serried boxes, packages, canisters, bottles and jars of salt (including Epsom, Kruschen, Enos, Seidlitz and Glauber), cinnamon, saffron, olive oil, palm oil, colza oil, ground- nut oil, castor oil, and just the old oil. In a tumultuous variety of bread-boxes were to be seen cornbread, rye, gluten, white, whole wheat, buns, pumpernickel, scones, bannocks, oatcakes, biscuits, *croissants* and *brioches*, and many cubic feet of permanently buttered toast. In the section reserved for *charcuterie* the youth's brilliant eye fell on quantities of ham, tongue, smoked eels, salami, pork, caviar, smoked salmon, bacon, pimentoes, gherkins, pickles, *foie gras*, anchovies, sar- dines, *liverwurst*, *cervelat*, *chipolata*, *morta- dello*, and striking quantities of plain ho- loney. In an enormous icebox rested crates, boxes and cases of eggs deriving from the hen, the sparrow, the bantam, the duck, the turkey, the goose, and the bald-headed eagle. In another, nested in ice, lay, deliciously, salmon, trout, carp, perch, eels, pike, her- rings, mackerel, and shark's-fins. The cheeses included Roquefort, Camembert, Cheddar, Cheshire, Stilton, Gorgonzola, Brie, Saint-Marcellin, and Snacks. Of fruit and vegetables there were too many for recount- ing in this volume, but the curious reader will find them in the sequel, "Eugene on the River in a Catboat."

Dazzled, astounded, bewildered and amazed, the youth, thoroughly surprised, sur- veyed these riches, then turned, in a paroxysm of joy, to Aunt Liz, forever brood- ing on her dream of time.

"This, then, was the Key," he ululated, "this the Door from which the Wolfe cannot be kept!" Triumphant he snatched a few dozen forks, knives, spoons, and can-openers and set to, his long, weary and unfathomable quest at last over forever.

"Beep," chuckled Uncle Habbakuk gauntly.

*It was very considerate of the Stand- ard Vacuum Oil Company to scam out of Ethiopia at Secretary Hull's re- quest. Now, no doubt, the Secretary will follow up his good work by telling cer- tain New York banking interests to scam out of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Haiti. But we're not holding our breath till he does.*

*WHEN* Magistrate Brodsky freed the five who were alleged to have torn down the swastika on the Bremen he gave, for the first time in our history, judicial sanction to something closely approaching direct action. That's what comes of a judge who, as it is reported, admires Old Sam Adams, late of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts there she stands.

## The Nazis Find A Friend

"The Semites reject everything that pertains to the pig. The Nordic peo- ples, on the contrary, accord the pig the highest possible honors. . . . In the cult of the Germans the pig occupies the first place, and is the first among the do- mestic animals. This predominance of the pig, the sacred animal destined to sacrifices among the Nordic peoples, makes it right to conclude that the re- ligion of these peoples has drawn its originality from the great trees of the Germanic forests. . . . Thus out of the darkness of earliest history arise two hu- man races, whose attitude in respect of pigs presents an absolute contrast. The Semites do not understand the pig, they do not accept the pig, they reject the pig, where this animal occupies the first place in the cult of the Nordic peoples."

HERR WALTHER DARRÉ, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE IN THE THIRD REICH.

## CLERICALISM INVADES AMERICAN POLITICS

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the way for the penetration of Latin Amer- ica and the Philippines by Wall Street capi- tal. The ruthless exploitation of the Latin Catholic population by American capital has time and again shocked liberals, but the Catholic leaders in the United States have never denounced it. They have, on the con- trary, gone on record urging the State De- partment to take steps against independent Latin-American Republics which refused to sanction the predatory policies of the church, as, recently, in the case of Mexico.

General Leonard A. Wood was the first head of the provisional government of Cuba after the Spanish-American War. In that post he first came into contact with the Catholic Church in its political aspect, and the ties that grew between Wood and the Church in Cuba stood both in good stead when he became Governor of the Catholic Philippines. His appointment to the last job may even have been influenced by the church, whose position in the islands, now recognized by official Washington, was so obscure when the United States took possession that Congress was openly hostile to it, as is shown in a Congressional report of Philippine conditions made at the beginning of this century. For his services to the church, of which he was not a communicant, General Wood was made the recipient of the Order of Pope Pius IX. This decoration is the highest the church can confer on a non-Catholic.

President Roosevelt, appreciating the reality of Catholic influence in the increas- ingly unruly Philippines, appointed a mem- ber of the Catholic Church as Governor, for- mer Mayor Frank Murphy of Detroit who was once a member of the faculty of the Catholic University of Detroit. Murphy's ap- pointment was immediately recognized in Washington as a church-inspired move. The New York *Herald Tribune* said: "By sending a Catholic to the Philippines Mr. Roosevelt, it is thought, will appease those elements who thought there should have been more than one Catholic in the Cabinet. As origin-