

have little patience with those who pretend to be so healthy in mind that they must decry as "unnecessary" anything of which they do not approve. A great deal of their hostility to such writing is due less to health than to a feeling of discomfort which is purely selfish in origin. The "healthy" critics say that a thing is "unnecessary" in the same spirit that people rail against any attempt of the idealist to present the living conditions of the proletariat in any form not definitely that of a sociological

treatise which they can ignore. They do not want to be made uncomfortable. So I am prepared for a great outburst of indignation at the morbidity of "Barbellion". It is a pity that the man's egotism gives such openings to critics of that stamp. Nevertheless the book should find its own public, not among the prurient-minded, but among those who are strong enough to bear a revelation of human nature, undiluted by sentimentality.

SIMON PURE

THE MONEY RETURNS OF AMERICAN AUTHORSHIP

BY EARL L. BRADSHER

The honor of being our first professional author is usually accorded to Charles Brockden Brown; but in reality it lies elsewhere. Brown appears before the public in 1797. Fourteen years before, Noah Webster had begun his long career of successful authorship. One hesitates, though, to assign Webster primacy among our professional men of letters. His course appears at first to have been marked by vacillation. Such was not the case with Jedidiah Morse, the "father of American geography", whose "Geography Made Easy", New Haven, 1784, proved such a treasure-trove that the author quickly followed up his first success with several other works in the same field. The domestic nature of much at least of their contents and, as a consequence, the superiority of their information over that of British writers, aided his books powerfully. Then, too, as a rule, the people who had lately won their physical freedom on the battle-

field were eager that their children should imbibe lessons of political independence through their schoolbooks.

But when Brown attempted to write novels for them, that was a different matter. He was forced to declare in 1800: "Book-making is the dullest of all trades, and the utmost that any American can look for in his native country is to be reimbursed his unavoidable expenses". The patriotism of the American people did not, to any marked degree at least, as yet extend to books intended merely to give pleasure. The prestige of an older civilization, with all its richness of association, legendary, historical, and social, and its long roll of illustrious authors, worked against him. True, the proportion of men who could buy books to their hearts' content was much smaller in the days of Brown than at present. But there were book-buyers enough to have made authorship a means of wealth if not of riches to an author of his genius, had

he not been handicapped by the spirit of colonial subserviency, a spirit which was to be a powerful factor in the reward of the American author for a third of a century.

The very utmost which one could hope to attain financially in the humanities during Brown's time is shown in the case of Robert Treat Paine, who for more than a decade was considered our greatest poet. In 1798 he wrote "Adams and Liberty", a song of seventy-four lines that had a tremendous vogue. Apparently so lightly did he hold the value of literary property that he made no effort to obtain a copyright. One was secured for him, however, by a "friendly and provident printer", so that he realized from the poem more than ten dollars a line. This, wrote a literary historian as late as 1829, "is a rare instance of remuneration for literary labours in this country". Freneau might well speak for all his tuneful tribe of Paine's day when he says that the poet is financially worse off than the tinker,—

For the tinker has something that people will buy.

Fitz-Greene Halleck, in spite of his comparative vogue, no doubt agreed with Freneau; for his entire returns for the labors of a literary lifetime of some forty-six years were but \$17,500. And this was the man who was told about 1820 by a prominent New York publisher that save Irving he was the only American whose works he would risk publishing! Just a few years later, Bryant made perhaps the only undignified remark of his career: "Politics and a belly-full are better than poetry and starvation". What poetry meant financially to Bryant may be guessed by the facts that in 1823 he was accepting two dollars each for his poems and that

he contracted in that year to furnish an average of one hundred lines a month for two hundred dollars a year. It is asserted that when he came to New York in 1825 he found no literary man not an editor who was living entirely by his pen.

But if the poet in the early days of the republic was having a hard time of it, even when patriotic verse was open to him, the prose writer, save he be an historian or a grinder out of text-books, was much harder hit. Essays and special articles were practically unknown to him as a source of income. At least such was the case until the establishment of "The North American Review" in 1815. That the "Review" was no gold-mine may be gathered from the fact that even as late as 1844 it paid its contributors but one dollar a page, save in the case of the more popular ones, who received two dollars.

Nowadays we look upon the novelist as the lucky heir of all the scribbling brotherhood. But a century ago, he was precisely the most unlucky. He could not publish a serial in a magazine. He had to dilute his pages with rhapsodies on the seven deadly sins and the plain man's pathway to heaven, for the puritanical instinct of a large part of his audience was ever on the watch. If he pleased the religiosity of the pillars of society, the rising generation or the more frivolous might see where the sugar coating was worn through, and shy from the bait. So a Mitchell of talent and a Hentz of genius after one or two unrewarded efforts sink from sight.

But the chief reason for their going was the unending flood of fiction that was pouring in, duty free, from Great Britain. Mackenzie, Mrs. Roche, Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. More, Miss Porter,

and, later, Scott, were so popular that there was little chance that American novelists, save those of transcendent genius and with some means of paying their monthly bills, would ever receive encouragement enough to cause them to mature in their art.

So skeptical in fact was the American public about the possibility of the development of a literature in this country that Cooper, yielding to the spirit of the time, tried to pass off his first novel as a British production. Goodrich, the publisher, Hawthorne, and Barker, the playwright, record in vivid passages the same pervasive atmosphere of skepticism and indifference under which our humanities were struggling to develop while the American public read the latest European success, pirated or imported.

Perhaps one reason why the public of the first quarter of the last century did not recognize the American author more fully was that he often carefully obscured his own personality. This diffidence was an echo in part of the attitude of the ruling poetic favorite, Lord Byron. Primarily it was the reflection of the moral disapproval with which a large part of the American public regarded all imaginative prose narrative, especially the novel. In many cases the author neglected the most elementary aspects of advertising his productions. Halleck, for instance, had been before the public for more than ten years before he allowed his name to appear upon the printed page. In 1822 Percival wrote: "I know of no more contemptible being than an author who writes for money. He converts the only shrine where mind can find a sure asylum into a huckster's shop." One has but to examine any bibliography of early

American literature, especially of the novel, to see how frequently our authors failed to attempt to make a previous work help sell a succeeding one.

Thus they played into the hands of the publisher, and the publisher in some cases was not averse to taking advantage of the opportunity. For example, Horatio Bridge estimates that for every dollar Hawthorne got for "Twice-Told Tales", the publisher received in excess of four and one-half dollars. But even at that, Hawthorne doubtless considered himself lucky; for being an American attempting to appeal through a copyrighted book to an American audience, he had more than once failed altogether of a publisher. Moreover, Hawthorne was fortunate in that he came late enough to be able to write juvenile books, a source of income to which Brown could not have turned without impairing his chances of ever being taken seriously by the reading public.

During the first quarter of the last century, American publishers had been issuing, largely without question or scruple, the books of European, especially British, writers. American authors as a class were not strong enough to make themselves heard, even though, powerfully aided by the War of 1812, there was throughout the period a growing sense of intellectual independence, a weakening of the chains of colonial subservency. Gradually an influential portion of the public was beginning to realize that if America was to be a free land in truth, its ideals must be moulded by no alien pens, but through the words of its own men of letters. In 1837, the first step on record in the United States was taken toward international

copyright. And then on the same day in 1838 the "Great Western" and the "Sirius", the first steamers to cross the Atlantic entirely by steam, dropped anchor in New York harbor. Incidentally it might be remarked that their coming went far toward sealing the doom of Philadelphia as our literary capital. New York was henceforth, after a brief reign by Boston, to be our intellectual bridge-head and center.

But to the financial hopes of the American author, the arrival of the steamers was for a period nothing less than disastrous. In the quick connection which they established with Europe, a certain class of our publishers saw an opportunity to publish the books of European authors in newspaper form. These they hawked about the streets in that eager age of reading as one would now circulate the news of some great battle.

In May, 1838, Willis, then easily one of the three or four most popular of our living authors, wrote in the prospectus for "The Pirate" that he was going to,—

... convey to our columns the cream and spirit of everything that ventures to light in France, England, and Germany. As to original American productions, we shall, as the publishers do, take what we can get for nothing (that is good), holding, as the publishers do, that while we can get Boz and Bulwer for a thank-ye or less, it is not pocket-wise to pay much for Halleck and Irving.

Halleck and Irving were, alas, not the only American authors who suffered through being hopelessly undersold by the works of European writers to whom no copyright need be paid. If a complete novel of James, Marryat, Bulwer-Lytton, or Dickens cost in periodical form only a dime, in some cases, why pay two dollars for a copyrighted book by Irving, Hawthorne, Neal, Cooper, or even Willis himself? In a short while the situation became

so desperate that the better class of publishers, who had been making some sort of payments to the European authors they republished and who had invested too much in American ones to be lightly lost, were forced to begin a war of underselling with the pirates. Their sounder financial basis brought them victory in the end. But in the meanwhile our authors were crushed between the warring interests. Irving was forced temporarily from the market. Cooper indulged in more than one lugubrious wail.

The two authors who fared passably well financially in the third and fourth decades, Prescott and Willis, by their exceptions but illustrate the rule that the American man of letters could hope for no adequate returns. Prescott, in the first place, seemed gifted with business ability of a high order. History in a new country that had made so much history itself in the last century was extremely popular, and in two cases at least Prescott chose highly opportune new-world subjects. In November, 1855, he was able to write that in the last six months he had received seventeen thousand dollars from "The Reign of Philip II" and his other works.

Against this must be matched the facts that the entire income of Emerson for a literary lifetime was only about thirty thousand dollars and that Hawthorne, having lost his position in 1849, returned to his wife to say, "I have lost my place. What shall we do now for bread?" Two years later he felicitates himself upon the fact that if all goes well with him in his literary undertakings, he will soon be able to buy a home at perhaps as high as two thousand dollars. And it was in this year of 1849 that the man acclaimed by many as the greatest literary genius we have ever

produced, Poe, died in abject poverty. Literary gossip records that in these palmy days of publishing peace when literary property is protected by international copyright in nigh all the lands between the seven seas, one periodical has been known to pay as high as five thousand dollars for a single short story. It is safe to say that Poe did not receive that much for all his short stories combined.

That Poe had a career at all in American literature was made possible largely, if not entirely, by the magazines. In the long and desperate warfare which the American authors waged for decent financial returns, in the face of stolen wares, until the victorious international copyright bill of 1891, it was the magazines that in large measure determined the possibility of a continued American authorship. In 1886, Dana Estes, member of a prominent Boston publishing firm, said before a Senate Committee on Patents:

It is impossible to make the books of most American authors pay, unless they are first published and acquire recognition through the columns of the magazines. Were it not for that one saving opportunity of the great American magazines, American authorship would be at a still lower ebb than at present.

Yet in spite of the comparative high prices of "Godey's Lady's Book" and of "Graham's Magazine", it was but a pittance the magazines paid. Willis, who for a while made almost five thousand dollars a year, mostly through them, was a conspicuous exception. Longfellow for many years accepted two dollars each for his poems. Whittier, the abolitionist, found their columns largely closed to him. In no adequate measure could they be made the medium for the genius of Lowell, Prescott, Bancroft, and Whitman; and these men were driven to superintending the publica-

tion of their own works. How many men and women of promise, gifted with less tenacity of purpose and less business ability than these, were driven despairingly from the field after their first unrewarded efforts, no one can say. But when we realize that Irving was forced in the middle of his career once entirely to abandon literature, we are justified in believing that they must have been many.

One publisher of standing has asserted that a fairly recent novel brought its author not less than sixty thousand dollars. Literary gossip has it that another one realized \$245,000 from an effort now fortunately forgotten. Did Cooper in those dark years of the 'forties when his works were selling for twenty-five cents a volume, look forward to what he would have considered the millennial days of the present? Did Bayard Taylor dream of them in 1873 when he wrote, after more than a quarter of a century of authorship, that his literary income for the last two years was naught?

The spread of tolerance and the march of science have put to flight puritan repression. And now that we have a true spirit of Americanism in our literature and in our reading public, so that our own men of letters may receive the reward of praise and pelf that is due them, let us go back and thank Noah Webster, Neal, and Emerson, such powerful factors in bringing it about. And let us especially thank those men, C. Matthews, G. P. Putnam, Bryant, Lowell, Gay Stedman, W. H. Appleton, Simms B. Matthews and others who from 1837 to 1891 waged war against piracy and finally had it recorded as the spirit of our law that, as Lowell said, "There is one thing better than a cheap book, and that is a book honestly come by".

THE WORLD'S FIRST THEATRE

BY OLIVER M. SAYLER

Constantin Sergeievitch Alexeieff reached out a large, warm hand and his furrowed face broke into a cordial smile as my Moscow host, himself a man of fine tastes and keen pride in the Russian theatre, started to introduce me in the little dressing-room to the rear of the stage of the Art Theatre. My letters had preceded me—letters telling how I had come all the way from America into the shadow of the Terror just to sit in the playhouses of Moscow and Petrograd and carry back to my own country a brand of inspiration from their defiant ruins. As the name in the letters and the name from the lips of my host flashed their identity across the mind of the artist, I felt the thrill of suddenly increased pressure on my hand, the smile vanished from his face, and tears came into his eyes. For seventeen thousand miles I had persisted on my errand, relying on my own faith, a blind faith which I could hardly analyze. Now I was face to face with an answering faith. I knew why I had come, and the knowledge of my responsibility almost overwhelmed me.

It was thus that I met Stanislavsky, president of the Council and first artist of the world's first theatre. Alexeieff he is in life, but all Russia and the world knows him by his stage name, Stanislavsky. All Russia knows him, and his name and his influence are written all over the record of the Russian theatre the last two decades.

Under the iron-grey soldierly guise of Vershinin, the reserved but sensitive lieutenant-colonel in Tchekhov's

"Three Sisters", I first saw him that evening of the day the theatres reopened after the Bolshevik Revolution. In the afternoon "The Blue Bird" had cast its spell over me and I had yielded to Stanislavsky, producer—the master artist of the active modern theatre. Maeterlinck's *féerie* had stood forth for the first time as its creator had intended, simply but richly, without the sentimental trappings of the western productions. Now it was Stanislavsky, actor, to whom I had surrendered, an actor distinguished for poise, for subtlety of shadings and for keenness of intellect, but above all for the beauty of his spirit.

Five days later I saw him again in his dressing-room to discuss my plans and this time I sat in the presence of the genial, easy-going, middle-aged Gaieff of Tchekhov's "The Cherry Orchard". The call-bell rang before we had finished and so I returned after the final curtain. At the mirror sat a man with silver hair. I was in the wrong room. My host had caught up with me by this time and turned me back at the door—to face Stanislavsky after all, Stanislavsky the man. At the age of fifty-five his hair is white. But that is the only sign of years. His huge square frame is vigorous and alert, his eye keen and kindly, his grasp of detail and his capacity for work thoroughly un-Russian. I believe he is the busiest man in Moscow, not excepting even the tireless People's Kommissars. At least, he is the hardest man in the city to find. Not so hard, though, if you