

His life was a perfect example of the lack of a single guiding principle or idea: he was a dilettante of poetry; he was an amateur in the field of love; he was a cynic in the realm of tradition and a scoffer in religion. That he was a stylist of talent, a psychologist of merit and a philosopher of observation, of smiling skepticism and amused tolerance, no one denies; but it is disregarding the claims of criticism to say that a fairy bent over his cradle and endowed him with some of the "*douceur angevine*" sung by du Bellay and that his voice is "the voice of all humanity".

The whole world has agreed that Anatole France is a great writer — poet, novelist, and critic. As master of French prose he had no peer in his day, and of his countrymen Voltaire alone was his superior in the use of irony and satire; he was able to blend himself in his creations, to saturate them with his knowledge of good and evil, of actualities and probabilities, of ideals and realities, so that each one represented some feature of Anatole France and reflected some angle of his vast culture; and like Socrates he had the conceit of knowledge.

One of the qualities that made Anatole France so popular was his diversity of culture. He was a fair poet, a great novelist, a sturdy philosopher, a delightful story teller, a charming essayist, an understanding critic. He had a beautiful medium for his inspiration, and made such use of it that his French is probably the most grammatically perfect that has ever been written. It retains its grace and shows no sign of toil, yet writing was a task for him and he would cast and recast a sentence until it finally satisfied him. Words which seem to have come to him with the same ease as song comes to a bird were wrought with the care and labor that Benvenuto Cellini expended on his Perseus. He believed with this great master that to use words wrongly and indefinitely is not merely an error in itself; it also creates an evil in the soul.

He enriched literature with one psychological novel, "*Le Lys Rouge*", and his "*Procurator of Judea*" is one of the greatest short stories of the world; but to say that Anatole France the poet will endure so long as literature continues to interest mankind, is laying it on too thick.

*(This is the second of three articles — the first of which appeared in March — on contemporary biography and autobiography.)*

## ON READING AN ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN VERSE

By Charles Hanson Towne

WE need not fear! For Beauty shall endure,  
 And the old quiet ways seem doubly sure.  
 Let the world add this harvest of young dreams  
 Of stars and flowers, the moon, the hills and streams  
 To the rich bins Shakespeare and Milton crammed.  
 Beauty still lives — you little critics be damned!

# THE SALVATION OF SINCLAIR LEWIS

By Grant Overton

*With a Portrait by Bertrand Zadig*

WHAT must I do to be saved, was the original form of the question, but not quite the form in which Sinclair Lewis asked it of himself for so many years. Rather, what must I do in order not to be damned — and he was practically alone among the younger men in showing any preoccupation, still less the least anxiety, on the score. Others younger and with more at stake than he were infinitely careless; F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ben Hecht and a whole crew did not care whether they were damned or not; they rather expected to be and they looked about for the devil, to tell him to take the foremost and not the hindmost. But Red Lewis, as Eugene O'Neill would say, was Diff'rent.

Not, you understand, O'Neillishly different. It is true that he was outwardly a somewhat unusual figure with his reddish hair, thin face and slender figure, nervously moving hands and somewhat eruptive manner. His aim seemed to be to have no habits, so much so that it became a habit of his to have no habits, not to be ordered or fixed, to be impulsive and spontaneous and irregular and excessive and rather wild. He was so sincere that it hurt. His several talents were not kept in a napkin, and yet somehow he seemed not to make anything of them. He could mimic most remarkably, but he was not a rival of Elsie Janis on the stage. He was without the repose of Will Rogers; given a rope, he would probably merely have hanged some-

body or himself. He was feverish, rude and rapid. Within him generosity was constantly pouring on fiery indignations so that he seemed to hiss.

And yet he was cool, calculating, and cynical besides.

He was incorrigible in making the mistake, fortunately so rare, of being honest with himself.

Oh, how he longed for salvation! — but most of the conventional paths were barred to him forever. He was not a proper subject for a psychic, an emotional, or a religious experience. He was married, the father of a child, and the driver of a car. He was a successful writer of marketable short and long fiction and the author of four published novels, none of which had sold particularly well. He moved once a year or oftener, living in New York, Minneapolis, California, Florida, etc., but "without sacrificing bathtubs — which are, of course, æsthetically and economically the symbols of civilization". Obviously, you cannot go about the salvation of a fellow like that by any of the ordinary methods.

And yet, as I say, he felt that life was beautiful and damned. He was so much this side of Paradise that he had relinquished any real hope of attaining it. But he was past thirty; he was becoming old; and he was determined not to sink without a trace nor to live happily ever after without one last deliberate struggle.

With his latest novel, the cheerful "Free Air", which had run serially in