

Whatever the final scientific conclusion may be, it seems perfectly evident to an unbiassed reader that there is something here not dreamed of in our philosophy. Psychic lights, ectoplasm, cold breezes, and abnormal photographs; animated tables and megaphones; bells, clocks, and victrolas repeatedly stopped or started upon request; the smashing of cabinets, the unnatural balancing of specially manufactured scales, and other weird performances, all under the control of scientists who pride themselves on their ability to detect fraud, but who, as far as one can see, have signally failed to furnish proof of it,—in the light of all this, one is disposed to be credulous. Allowing due discount for the enthusiastic faith of Mr. Bird, it is certainly more human to be credulous than to refrain from accepting the testimony of many observers who *seem* to be competent, especially when those who withhold their endorsement fail to come forward with anything more convincing than a caution to the effect that “there *may* be natural explanations for all these phenomena.” That begs the question, for everything will be “natural”, once it is “explained”, — even immortality.

F. C. D.

### Nansen at Twenty

In Pittsburgh, Chicago, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, in city after city, men who looked the parts of bank presidents and traction chiefs were heard to say to Fridtjof Nansen that he had been their boyhood hero. Nansen always seemed a little uncomfortable about this. He would not think himself old enough to have been a hero of adventure when these men were children. Even now, in his sixties, he lived a life that was strenuous for the young men who accompanied him; and when they suggested a day of rest from the rigors of travel and lecturing, he said, “Rest? I get all I need on the trains. We’ll go to Springfield.” But in *HUNTING AND ADVENTURE IN THE ARCTIC* (Duffield, \$4.00), written from his old journals since his return to Norway, he has admitted the passage of time even to himself: “Many a year has passed since that morning in March (1882). The young fellow of twenty is now one of the ‘older generation’ writing about bygone days. . . .”

Some think him the world’s first citizen. Hundreds of thousands in Russia, in Germany, in the Near East, prisoners to war, fugitives from the Turk, have him to thank for their lives; his own countrymen must remember how he helped them to national independence or brought them grain from America during the cruel years of war. His words should be precious to them, not least this book which tells of the beginnings of Nansen, his first adventure toward the farthest north in a sealing vessel, *The Viking*. It is a tale of drift ice and polar currents, of Greenland seals, of the bottle-nosed whale, and the polar bear. Three polar bears in a day is Nansen’s record of July 11, 1882, and one of them he shot precariously balanced on a chunk of ice while the bear clutched at his feet. Those bankers and traction chiefs should have a few good evenings!

The book is illustrated by Nansen’s own drawings. “He gets the ink even in his hair”, his wife complained.

JAMES CREESE.

New York, N. Y.

### Masters of Modern Art

In his *MASTERS OF MODERN ART* (Huebsch, \$3.50) Walter Pach has given us an exceptionally intelligent and interesting book. An original etching by the author himself constitutes the frontispiece and grouped together at the end of the volume are thirty-six illustrations, accompanied by critical remarks. In a space of little more than one hundred pages this book provides a discreet and rational introduction to modern art, surpassing in its lucidity of ideas and its restrained statement, as well as in its breadth of view, any other attempt of the kind in English.

Himself an artist and familiar with all the crises through which modern art has passed, he maintains a moderation that will gain friends for his subject, as fanatic and intolerant works have failed to do.

The brevity of his treatment is at the same time probably the feature of his book accounting for those qualities which some readers will feel to be defects. On every other page at least there are to be found ideas or facts which call for more complete discussion. The suavity and coherence of his style, however, does not

permit an impression of fragmentary or random utterance, as is apt to be the case when a writer is pressed for space.

A man of his time, with a profound knowledge of French painting in particular, he naturally feels that modern art radiates a vitality in no way inferior to great epochs of the past. He concedes that much of the current production is counterfeit or spurious, and he seems to have as his standards of judgment only personal acquaintance with many of those artists he discusses or his personal reactions to their works. In spite of the insufficiency of this basis for sweeping judgments, it at least spares the readers that vague moralizing philosophy with which far too many artists are inclined to flavor their expression when resorting to the printed page.

One great service Mr. Pach performs when he demonstrates the unbroken continuity of art through recent decades, as an historical movement. His French prejudices, — which we may welcome as an offset to some rather heavy Teutonic critical writings, — also arouse in him a reverence for the traditional and the classic, which serves as an element of restraint and moderation in his views. However, to show that an artistic development is a real link in the chain of historical evolution, is by no means the same as showing that it deserves to rank in the classical tradition and be adorned with this last wreath of critical approbation. The masters, according to the author, are those who give a new direction to art, but a painting may thus have historical or critical significance, while possessing little or no aesthetic value in the opinion of any age but our own.

Mr. Pach is perhaps too harsh in classifying all the producers of the newer art which he deems worth while under the label of cubists and refusing to consider seriously the claims of other recent systems. His admiration for Barye, in view of the important names left unmentioned, also seems to have led him to devote an unnecessarily large amount of space to that artist.

In his bibliography, several interesting and significant books in English which are among those most accessible to the usual reader are omitted, and German works are almost ignored. These faults,

however, are relatively unimportant. After reading most of the important books on modern art written within the last few years, I can truthfully say that I had greater pleasure and more profit from reading this book than from any other that I can remember.

A. PHILIP McMAHON.

New York, N. Y.

## The Mature Hamsun

Having at last emerged completely from the painful subjectivity which pervaded his earliest work, in *SEGELFOSS TOWN* (Knopf, \$2.50) Knut Hamsun approaches very near to the complete detachment and objectivity which characterized *The Growth of the Soil*. In content, the book is a continuation of an earlier work, *Children of the Age*, and as such it brings down to the twentieth century the development of the village of Segelfoss from a mediaeval feudal hamlet under the domination of the owner of Segelfoss Manor into a self-governing modern town. This transformation, however, centering around the declining fortunes of the mill-owner, Tobias Holmengraa, who had succeeded Willatz Holmsen as the chief figure in the town's activity, is simply the central thread on which a series of unconnected, or at best loosely connected episodes and incidents are hung. These occur chiefly on two levels: there are those growing out of the life of the peasants and poorer townfolk, and pointing definitely forward to *The Growth of the Soil*; and there are those concerned with the rather unconvincing love tangle of Herr Holmengraa's daughter and the young lord of the Manor, which hark back just as definitely to the earlier book.

To these must be added the story of Baardsen, telegraphist, philanthropist, and philosopher, leading up to the magnificently dramatic and poetic moment of his wounding at the hands of the young actress, Clara. This sub-plot, if, for want of a better name, it may be called that, is in many ways the most artistically perfect part of the novel, giving rise to passages of both narrative and descriptive writing which the author has nowhere surpassed. Certainly it may be said that