

various dialects that his characters use "have not been done in a haphazard way, or by guesswork, but painstakingly." But we cannot accept at its face value his statement in the essay Concerning the American Language that "when I speak my native tongue in its utmost purity in England, an Englishman can't understand me at all." It is an overstatement characteristic of him and of other humorists, both American and British. His own writings and his experience as a lecturer in all parts of the world can be cited against him. I doubt if any English schoolboy who can understand Dickens fails to understand "Huckleberry Finn." And Mark Twain's speech, deliberately cultivated (he was a born and self-conscious actor with an excellent voice), did not baffle the English people. Indeed, I have heard him say that his most satisfactory, most responsive audiences were English.

But here we meet two questions. What does he mean by "my native tongue in its utmost purity"? And is not ease of oral communication between people who use any sort of English largely a matter of individual diction, of *clear* pronunciation, independent of vocabulary, turns of phrases, differences of syllabic accent, differences of vowel values? One English author, whom I respect too much to name, speaks so badly that he must be almost as painfully unintelligible to a Briton as to a Yankee. In general we have to be on our guard against the literary fellow. And yet we are dependent for collected and rationalized knowledge on some sort of literary person, either the artist in words or the technical scholar.

In general, too, we must keep our aesthetic and emotional preferences separate from our observations of the facts, though, to be sure, aesthetics, the sense of the better or the worse word, of the lovelier or the uglier sound, has an important place in the discussion. It is not helpful or intelligent for an Englishman to resent and deplore the departure of American habits from his. And it is not helpful or intelligent, though it is delightfully funny, for Mr. Mencken to tell us that "Brander Matthews . . . was an eager apologist for Americanisms until he joined the Ochs lodge of Anglo-Saxon brothers." Controversy based on likings does in a measure bring out the facts, for it keeps the question, the manifold questions, stirred up. But we wish to know the facts first. Aesthetic questions are primarily questions of individual skill in the use of any sort of words and of individual ability to enjoy words skilfully used. Let not our preferences spoil the record or divert us from the dispassionate methods of science.

"The standard southern dialect of English has been arrested in its growth by its purists and grammarians. . . . American, despite the gallant efforts of the professors, has so far escaped any such suffocating formalization." These two allied statements should be shaded instead of sharpened as they are in Mr. Mencken's discussion. They push the lines of development too far apart. The process of growth of the living language in every nation which has a literature is a contest between change and rigidity. English has not been frozen solid for two centuries, and American English has not been free from formalization. It is a question of degree. O. Henry and W. W. Jacobs are, in their own style and in the talk of their characters, nearer to each other than they are to Fielding. Both have come a long way from the eighteenth century, the American humorist, of course, much further than the Englishman. How much further is determined by a multitude of details. These details have not been thoroughly studied in relation to the language as a whole. It is easy to select and insist on certain details and overdrive them to a doubtful conclusion.

And many of the details are open to question in point of their "Americanism." Mencken says that "demean," in the sense of "bemean" or "degrade," is "actually American in origin." Is it? It is used by Sheridan, Dickens, and Thackeray. "Aggravate," in the sense of irritate or anger, is used by Dickens, in "Great Expectations," and used unconsciously and seriously in straight narrative, not as an error in the speech of a vulgar American or Englishman. "Reliable" may have been combated by gram-

marians, but it is not an Americanism, for it is used by Coleridge and Newman, who were both sheltered from American influence. The motives of some American words are misunderstood by Mencken and other grammarians. For example, "casket" is not, as he thinks, following A. S. Hill and the rest of the rhetoricians, a euphemism for "coffin." It is a trade name, with a practical distinction, as any undertaker (American: "funeral director"?) will tell you. A coffin is a hexagonal box, tapering toward the foot. A casket is four-sided; it is not always elaborate and expensive, and its name, in the trade, is specific, not euphemistic.

These are minor matters, illustrations of the difficulties of collecting the facts from which generalizations may safely proceed. Other comments on minor matters belong rather in a private letter to Mr. Mencken than in a review. I suggest, as pertinent to a review and interesting to any reader who enjoys this subject, that there should be added to Mr. Mencken's bibliography "Words and Their Ways in English Speech" by Greenough and Kittredge and "Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum" by Wallace Irwin.

JOHN MACY

## John Muir

*The Writings of John Muir.* Sierra Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company. 8 vols. \$20.

THE infinite spectacle of what we are in the habit of calling Nature has produced almost as many species of observer as there are species of wind and rock and animal and plant to be observed. There are idiotic animals and plants, and we have been plagued with idiotic Nature-writers, plagued until we incline to shy at new ones, fearing that if we encourage them they will strike an attitude or babble a gospel. Still, there are the eagle and the bluebird, the otter and the fox; there are Audubon, Thoreau, Burroughs, Hudson, Muir.

John Muir died in 1914, or he might have been better known. Death on a different scale was about to occupy the energies of the race, and not much attention was paid to the passing of an old naturalist who had devoted his life to mountains, forests, and glaciers, and who never had liked killing. Now, however, when there are many readers for a quiet man like W. H. Hudson, and books are called forth by the death of Burroughs, there may be a movement toward Muir. An examination of his collected works shows them to be as fresh and strong as ever, and urges the belief that they already are American classics.

Burroughs said once, with characteristic modesty and accuracy: "Thoreau . . . has a heroic quality that I cannot approach." Muir is one of the heroes. There is a thrill in his books such as we do not get from Izaak Walton, Gilbert White, Richard Jefferies, Burroughs, of course, Fabre, or even Hudson, much as we may love those men in their respective times and places. He was no worker in pastoral prose like the immortal Angler, nor was he immovable in a parish like the naturalist of Selborne, soaking up Nature as a turtle soaks up the sun. He did not have the pathological dependence on field and hedge-row that the lonely Jefferies had; he did not concentrate upon the fascinating minutiae with which the books of Burroughs are methodically filled; he did not do his looking with the almost insect eyes of Fabre. And he lacked—as who does not?—the genius of Hudson for telling tales, the beautiful, baffling gift of a simplicity that never on two pages is the same. Muir belongs with Audubon and Thoreau. Not that he is anything like either, or that anyone is like Thoreau. But he shares their boundless energy, and he plunges into Nature with their particular type of enthusiasm. Audubon careered through deep forests and along wide rivers after birds, Thoreau vaunting his anarchy among the hickories and woodchucks of Walden, Muir keyed by the sublimities of the Sierra to a forty-years' ecstasy—these are substantially the same.

Muir came with his father from Scotland to Wisconsin in 1849, when he was eleven. The last of his books which he ever

saw printed, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth," and it is one of the most admirable American autobiographies, gives proof that even as a boy in Scotland he had been extraordinarily excited by powerful, free movements in the natural world. Here is an account of the skylarks at home:

"Often times on a broad meadow near Dunbar we stood for hours enjoying their marvelous singing and soaring. From the grass where the nest was hidden the male would suddenly rise, as straight as if shot up, to a height of perhaps thirty or forty feet, and sustaining himself with rapid wing-beats, pour down the most delicious melody, sweet and clear and strong, overflowing all bounds, then suddenly he would soar higher again and again, ever higher and higher, soaring and singing until lost to sight even on perfectly clear days. . . . To test our eyes we often watched a lark until he seemed a faint speck in the sky and finally passed beyond the keenest-sighted of us all. 'I see him yet!' we would cry, 'I see him yet!' 'I see him yet!' 'I see him yet!' as he soared. And finally only one of us would be left to claim that he still saw him. At last he, too, would have to admit that the singer had soared beyond his sight, and still the music came pouring down to us in glorious profusion, from a height far above our vision, requiring marvelous power of wing and marvelous power of voice, for that rich, delicious, soft, and yet clear music was distinctly heard long after the bird was out of sight. Then, suddenly ceasing, the glorious singer would appear, falling like a bolt straight down to his nest, where his mate was sitting on the eggs."

In Wisconsin Muir worked very hard on his Calvinist father's backwoods farm, growing to great stature and strength and educating himself in poetry and the sciences under difficulties that few boys on earth would have surmounted. Bed-time in winter was eight o'clock, and the father was so great a stickler for rules that he rebuked the son for lingering in the kitchen, as he often did, ten minutes with book and candle; adding, however, that he could get up any morning as early as he liked. Pathetically grateful for this concession, Muir did nothing less than rise at one each zero morning of his fifteenth winter and read in the kitchen or work in the cellar with tools. He developed an uncanny genius for mechanical invention, contriving in scrap iron and wood a number of marvelous clocks, a huge thermometer that could be read from any corner of the farm, and a machine that would dump him out of bed in the morning—though he had little need of that last, as his father grimly observed. He soon became famous in the neighborhood and was encouraged one year to exhibit his inventions at the State Fair. He went to Madison, made a hit, secured employment of several sorts, worked his way through the State University, and by thirty was equipped for whatever distant wildernesses most irresistibly called him. "I wish I knew where I was going," he wrote in a letter at twenty-nine. "I wish I could be more moderate in my desires, but I cannot, and so there is no rest."

The demon drew him first to Florida, whither he went on foot from Indianapolis in 1867, botanizing. The journal which he kept on that excursion has been posthumously published as "A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf," and is rich not only in delicate observation but in humor. He was entirely happy, tramping the back paths of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida, for specimens abounded, and the shade was thick and continuous, but he was also quick to observe the people as they passed, and in those post-Rebellion days the people were curious when they were not pathetic. He slept several nights under live-oaks in the Bonaventure graveyard near Savannah, at home there because he accepted death as he accepted life, with a whole mind. "Death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life . . . the grave has no victory, for it never fights." From Florida he took a boat to Cuba, where he was seized with a passion for California, and April of the next year landed him at San Francisco. The rest of his life, so far at least as it can be read in books, was identified with the mountains of the West and North. He went to Africa once, and once to Siberia, but his writing was about the Sierra Nevada, Alaska, and the Arctic

Ocean, and his best and greatest writing was about the Sierra.

"Looking westward from the summit of the Pacheco Pass one shining morning, a landscape was displayed that after all my wanderings still appears as the most beautiful I have ever beheld. At my feet lay the Great Central Valley of California, level and flowery, like a lake of pure sunshine, forty or fifty miles wide, five hundred miles long, one rich furred garden of yellow compositae. And from the eastern boundary of this vast golden flower-bed rose the mighty Sierra, miles in height, and so gloriously colored and so radiant, it seemed not clothed with light, but wholly composed of it, like the wall of some celestial city. Along the top and extending a good way down, was a rich pearl-gray belt of snow; below it a belt of blue and dark purple, marking the extension of the forests; and stretching along the base of the range a broad belt of rose-purple; all these colors, from the blue sky to the yellow valley smoothly blending as they do in a rainbow, making a wall of light ineffably fine. Then it seemed to me that the Sierra should be called, not the Nevada or Snowy Range, but the Range of Light. And after ten years of wandering and wondering in the heart of it, rejoicing in its glorious floods of light, the white beams of the morning streaming through the passes, the noonday radiance on the crystal rocks, the flush of the alpenglow, and the irised spray of countless waterfalls, it still seems above all others the Range of Light. In general views no mark of man is visible upon it, nor anything to suggest the wonderful depth and grandeur of its sculpture. None of its magnificent forest-crowned ridges seems to rise much above the general level to publish its wealth. No great valley or river is seen, or group of well-marked features of any kind standing out as distinct pictures. Even the summit peaks, marshaled in glorious array so high in the sky, seem comparatively regular in form. Nevertheless the whole range five hundred miles long is furrowed with canyons two to five thousand feet deep, in which once flowed majestic glaciers, and in which now flow and sing the bright rejoicing rivers."

So lofty and so vibrant was the world Muir made the dwelling-place, now of his body, now of his imagination, during the remainder of his many years. The energy of the paragraph just quoted can be matched on almost any page of the five volumes which he devoted to his mountains. It is a miracle of literature, this rapture maintained at so high a pitch over so long a time. He passed the prime portion of his life climbing these cliffs, exploring these valleys, measuring and mapping these glaciers, threading these forests, sleeping upon these peaks, pausing upon these precipices "transparent as glass" to the beauty around him, and zealous to enter that beauty in his journal. The legend of his mountaineering is still strong in California. He could and would go anywhere, and he always brought back poetry with his facts; for he was a scientist, an authority on glaciers, as avid after data as an Agassiz or a Darwin.

Perhaps a greater miracle consists in the fact that his books have the virtue of variety. There was every chance for them to be monotonous. Clarence King, mountaineering in the later 1860's, found comic relief from the exaltation of the Sierra in pack-mules and the squalid Digger Indians whom he met and occasionally camped with. If the readers of Muir grow tired of the "high, cool, green pastures" where he feeds their minds, it can never be for long, because relief is near in the animals which he inimitably describes, the shepherds and the Indians he hits off. No pages of Burroughs or Thoreau or Fabre are livelier than those of Muir on bears, on bees, on mountain sheep, on rattle-snakes, on the Douglas squirrels, and on those equally living things, the redwoods and the valley flowers. Or take this shepherd who accompanied him up the mountains in the summer of 1869:

"Our shepherd is a queer character and hard to place in this wilderness. His bed is a hollow made in red dry-rot punky dust beside a log which forms a portion of the south wall of the corral. Here he lies with his wonderful everlasting clothing on,



wrapped in a red blanket, breathing not only the dust of the decayed wood but also that of the corral, as if determined to take ammoniacal snuff all night after chewing tobacco all day. Following the sheep he carries a heavy six-shooter swung from his belt on one side and his luncheon on the other. The ancient cloth in which the meat, fresh from the frying-pan, is tied, serves as a filter through which the clear fat and gravy juices drip down on his right hip and leg in clustering stalactites. This oleaginous formation is soon broken up, however, and diffused and rubbed evenly into his scanty apparel, by sitting down, rolling over, crossing his legs while resting on logs, etc., making shirt and trousers water-tight and shiny. His trousers, in particular, have become so adhesive with the mixed fat and resin that pine needles, thin flakes and fibers of bark, hair, mica scales, and minute grains of quartz, hornblende, etc., feathers, seed wings, moth and butterfly wings, legs and antennae of innumerable insects, or even whole insects such as the small beetles, moths, and mosquitoes, with flower petals, pollen dust, and indeed bits of all plants, animals, and minerals of the region adhere to them and are safely imbedded, so that though far from being a naturalist he collects fragmentary specimens of everything and becomes richer than he knows. His specimens are kept passably fresh, too, by the purity of the air and the resiny bituminous beds into which they are pressed. Man is a microcosm, at least our shepherd is, or rather his trousers. These precious overalls are never taken off, and nobody knows how old they are, though one may guess by their thickness and concentric structure. Instead of wearing thin they wear thick, and in their stratification have no small geological significance."

The account may close with Muir's two Arctic volumes, "Travels in Alaska" and "The Cruise of the Corwin," which are triumphs of the same sort. The danger in their case was that too much should be said about ice and snow. Muir, whose constitution after all was of the purest and coldest stuff, who looked upon the universe with veritably "glacial eyes," got all the whiteness possible into his report, but when he had got that in, resorted to Eskimos and reindeer, seals and polar bears, for entertainment. The Arctic volumes, like all the others that he stole good time from Nature to assemble from old notes, have every sign that they will seem refreshing and important as long as there are persons to read them.

MARK VAN DOREN

## Economics in Europe

*What Next in Europe?* By Frank A. Vanderlip. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$1.75.

*A Revision of the Treaty.* By J. M. Keynes. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.

THESE two books are complementary. One is the work of a great practical financier and business man, the other that of an economic theorist who has been drawn out of academic seclusion into close contacts with public affairs. The one approaches his subject from the comparatively disinterested angle of an outside spectator, the other as a member of a nation vitally concerned in the European trouble. Mr. Vanderlip gives us the best extensive survey of the European situation up to date from first-hand information. Mr. Keynes gives an intensive study of European economics with the Reparations problem as its kernel.

Several months journeying through most European countries, with opportunities of intercourse with statesmen, business men, and labor leaders, afforded a unique opportunity to one who, like Mr. Vanderlip, knew what questions to put and what information to collect. But the most conspicuous merit of his book is not the vivid pictures he gives of the financial quandary in which every European state now finds itself and the miserable entanglements that clog the process of recovery. The vicious circle formed by reparations, inter-Allied indebtedness, inflation, unbalanced budgets, extravagant expenditure, burdensome taxa-

tion, unemployment is dismally familiar to us all. Mr. Vanderlip gathers the meaning of this otherwise confused medley of troubles into a single judgment of general import by attributing their common causation to the Bad Peace, and a Peace which is Bad primarily in that it ignored economic laws. It was, of course, also bad in other ways, unjust, vindictive, pledge-breaking, and was followed by a course of conduct which drove these vices to extremities of cruelty. But the central folly and iniquity consisted in making political arrangements which violated economic laws. A wide-eyed, well-informed American necessarily sees Europe as one economic system, not complete but in substance interdependent by a long and ever-growing intercourse which was reflected in a high degree of national economic specialization. The interchange of goods and services across national barriers has been conducted by an elaborate, steady, and secure machinery of transport and finances, built up and operated mainly by private business enterprise for the common welfare of all peoples. The political and economic conditions of the peace and post-war Allied policy were a closely contrived sabotage of this economic intercourse. Mr. Vanderlip cites the chief features of this cruel folly, the mutilation of Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria for the enrichment of Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Serbia, and Rumania, with alien millions and foreign territories, the dividing up of Turkey by the separate and conflicting pulls of Greece, Italy, France, and Great Britain, the chief object of imperialism in each case being the exploitation of the national resources, the labor, and the taxable capacity of the seized provinces.

The treaties which wrought these evils he rightly designates the Poison Treaties of Paris. "Outside of the provision for the League of Nations, there is nothing in the various treaties of Paris that is healing. It is not difficult to see how men were moved to conceive such treaties. It is very difficult to see, however, how a continent afflicted with them can recover until they are rewritten; for that they will be rewritten is inevitable. They have set up situations as unstable as quicksilver. They have drawn national lines that may be erased like pencil marks. They have created economic conditions which must be altered, or whole peoples must economically perish."

Much of the trouble Mr. Vanderlip justly imputes to what he terms the "economic illiteracy" of politicians. In other words, a series of sudden and violent changes were imposed upon the European system, for political, strategic, racial, and other reasons which ignored the vital common factors. The manufacture of new sovereign states in Eastern Europe which broke off economic relations with one another is only the most conspicuous example of this error. Everywhere the doctrine of self-determination was abused to this end, by encouraging new nationalities to become economically self-sufficient, when nature and past history had denied the possibility of such self-sufficiency. It is really tragical that high statecraft should have betrayed such crude ignorance of the essential facts of life. Mr. Vanderlip's survey is, I think, defective only in one respect. He had not time to visit Russia and get his information on the spot. His chief positive judgments, formed after intercourse with many Russians in other countries, are doubtless correct. Bolshevism cannot be now displaced by any other form of government; it is not likely to spread in its extreme form to other countries; and considerable modifications in its policy are taking place. Mr. Vanderlip also sees that Germany must play the largest part in any economic reconstruction and development of Russia, and that it is to the interest of all Europe that she should do so. He does not, however, recognize how deeply responsible the blockade of Russia by the Allies and their stimulation of civil war in that country have been for the present miseries and starvation to which countless millions of these innocent peoples, the sufferers of bad government and wicked foreign intervention, have been condemned.

Mr. Vanderlip has two important constructive proposals, which deserve close attention but into which I have no space to enter here. The first is the setting up of a Gold Reserve Bank