

to the trade union a necessary rôle in the making of wage-rates. The men who invented the older doctrines grounded price in "marginal utility" to the end that they might prove that the economic order extracted the greatest amount of utility from limited resources. Mr. Henderson recognizes that so long as persons possess pocketbooks of different sizes, the several amounts which they can pay for an article are not indicative of the respective utilities to them. As a result he makes price an expression of the marginal utility to each purchaser. Needless to say this shortcircuits his "utility," makes it an empty and clanging term, and leaves the utilities of purchasers in a relation to price which is as accidental as their weights, the quality of their clothes or their tastes in travel. Such examples as these, and their number is legion, indicate how at the touch of reality the older concepts loosen, the thread of dialectic is broken and the articulate fabric of a tough system falls to pieces. The final terms of his argument cease to be the resting places of an economic explanation. They remain as vestiges, magical polysyllables, the terms of professional erudition, words without significance or meaning in an inquiry with a purpose.

The confused character of Mr. Henderson's thought and language is even more apparent in his discussion of "the laws of supply and demand." In the grim and hard-headed old systems of yesterday they were the bone and sinew of economic verity. A theorist could show that they had governed the economic life of Robinson Crusoe on his desert island and that without drawing heavily upon his resources in dialectic. And, after a moment of terror at the prospect, the same theorist could plausibly explain their necessary use in a socialistic state. Since the theorist knew no psychology, regarded man as "a globule of desire," and thought of his mind as a calculating machine, the mysteries of human conduct imposed no barrier between the terms of his formulas. By the Almighty, his laws were eternal and immutable and he was ready any day to match truths with any physicist in the land.

It is not economics which has taken away the meaning of the laws of supply and demand which Mr. Henderson tries so valiantly to preserve. It is rather psychology, which he insists is a thing apart from all matters economic. But the truth is that any "law" which depends for its effect upon the appreciation of certain facts by many individuals, their judgments about these facts, their actions which result, and the consequences of these has no valid claim to even a remote kinship with natural law. Nor can an explanation which runs in terms of such conglomerates as "supply" and "demand" be called a "law." The device of a system of changeable prices is an excellent one for mediating between the production of wealth and its use; but it is a device. Where it is used there will doubtless be some tendency for "supply" and "demand" to meet at a price. But professionals are not required to discover so obvious a "truth"—or is it a truism? The hard hearted but hard headed theorist of old made no grudging argument for the perfection and goodness of an economic order based upon the absolute and eternal laws of supply and demand. But when Mr. Henderson tones down competition, gets economic phenomena moving involuntarily, disclaims a defence of the existing order and then proclaims his discovery of order among matters economic and insists that "The laws of supply and demand represent what is socially desirable now or under any system," we find his statements a mere verbal shell of a departed argument that holds neither truth nor significance.

This volume is another proof of the statement that the economics of the schools tends to run to seed in a few generations. Since it bears the official stamp of the Cambridge school, it seems to testify that at this citadel of economics there exists ignorance of almost all the literature of economic theory of the last fifteen years. Since "the more distinguished of the younger economists" at Cambridge are the products of a discipline at which they have never looked critically from without, their own mental habits stand between them and the economic reality of modern industrialism. Besides, they have a vested interest in defending a doctrinal system which is to some extent associated with the name of Cambridge. For these reasons, in England at least, in the near future the significant work in economics is likely to come out of Oxford. An English economist, as well known here as at home, recently stated in a letter, "The lectures at Oxford have been so damned dull that no one has attended and a school of economics has never got established. For that reason Oxford is fertile soil for the 'new' economics." The truth is as often as not against sound pedagogy; and there is little doubt that the dullness which kept men away from economics at Oxford has made a far more substantial contribution to the subject than the excellent instruction at Cambridge. For out of Oxford have already come Tawney, Clay, Hammond and Cole—to mention only the most conspicuous—all of them untutored in the older economic discipline and all of them with real contributions to an understanding of the economic order to their credit. It is perhaps their lack of special economic training which enables them to see reality clearly and not through the darkened glass of a semi-metaphysical system which was never intended to explain our economic world. The truths which they proclaim may never satisfy Mr. Henderson's demand for "laws"; for they are hedged about with too many peradventures to be set down in italics, much less in the black faced type which he reserves for his choicest verities. Nor will they meet his requirement that a truth to be true must satisfy a "sense of symmetry." But they are far more than the vestiges of an apologetic explanation of an economic order that is gone.

WALTON H. HAMILTON.

## Paint

*Paint, by Thomas Craven. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$2.00.*

THOSE who have followed Mr. Thomas Craven's keen and indefatigable criticism in the *New Republic* and the *Dial* will greet *Paint* as a fresh criticism of art; those who come to *Paint* without preparation will find in it—as one used to say—a criticism of life. *Paint* has all the conciseness and pith and intelligence of Mr. Craven's reviews; in addition, it has a good share of the qualities that make a first rate piece of fiction. I will not damn it with more violent praise.

The neglected artist is a conventional figure in sentimental fiction; and in a recent crop of autobiographies this theatrical canker-worm has raised its head in another field; so that if *Paint* were regarded only from the standpoint of theme and scenery one might be prepared to weep crocodile tears over a brummagem tragedy—and drown the taste in one's mouth with a strong cup of coffee. Needless to say, Mr. Craven's artist is not the diabetic, sugar-and-blood creature of current fiction; neither is his art a vague miracle which one must accept on the author's word;

nor yet is his relation to society filled with nameless, imaginary grievances. Mr. Craven has given us instead a sharp glimpse of the real thing, in outlines as dexterous and unrelenting as his hero's pictures: indeed, the very stench of the studio seeps through the narrative, as if the manuscript had lain around until it was spattered with color and impregnated with turpentine and stale tobacco smoke.

The story of *Paint* spans the decade that elapsed between the return of the painter, Carlock, from Paris to his final extinction in 1921. His art develops; his spirit toughens; his body weakens; the man dies. The pattern is worked out with an almost geometric sense of proportion. Carlock's plans, Carlock's difficulties, Carlock's exhibitions, Carlock's criticism of his fellows and society, Carlock's picaresque adventures in his mere hovel of a studio above a saloon—these elements create a sharp mosaic of detail out of which the theme finally emerges. Carlock gets support for his faith in himself, and a steady supply of bacon and bread, from a coarse, tender, hankering creature, his model, Nettie: by her aid he is able to dedicate himself completely to his art and to her, before he dies, he assigns his entire output of pictures. In Nettie, the outcast, "Carlock's pictures have at least found their 'Destination'."

This is in truth a rogue's tale, with the adventure befalling the hero not on the highroad but within the confines of an inexorable tunnel. The skill with which Mr. Craven records what passes within the tunnel, and admits the characters and incidents that conspire to bring out the artist's homelessness and helplessness in "cultured," metropolitan New York is notable: only occasionally does Mr. Craven overstress the prehensile lecheries of Nettie, and only in the final drama of Carlock's death does Mr. Craven roll his hero perhaps too neatly into the ultimate terminal. Mr. Craven's directness in epithet and incident has something of the fine candor of the eighteenth century; but as yet he lacks the seasoned gaiety that would give us a shelf-companion to Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy. For good or ill, Mr. Craven sees the main incidents of the book through the intent and unflickering eyes of Carlock himself; and the detachment necessary to even a Rabelaisian turn of humor is forfeited in the author's absorption.

On the whole, Mr. Craven has told his story with workmanlike skill, in which a maximum effect is obtained with a minimum of verbal effort. *Paint* has, in fact, the freshness, the directness and irretrievability of an etching: if much is given up by using such a small, copperplate surface to work on, the material that remains is adequately brought out. It is a pleasure to acknowledge *Paint* as a new contribution to the tightly-drawn type of novel, of which the *Life and Death of Harriet Frean* is perhaps the outstanding example. Within his circumscribed area, Mr. Craven necessarily makes Carlock and Nettie bulk in the centre of the picture, leaving the other characters to fill the interstices; and yet the effect is that of a complete demonstration. It is easy for the reader to thicken the implications.

While the theme of *Paint* is inextricably woven into the pattern of the story—so deftly that *Paint* cannot for a moment be defamed as a "novel with a purpose"—Mr. Craven will perhaps forgive me if I say that the criticism of art and society remains as a sort of solid deposit in the mind even after the taste and tang of the story have departed. In *Paint* Mr. Craven has not merely satisfied us as a novelist: he has added to his province as a critic: and I cannot think of any recent work in criticism, not even Mr. Craven's own excellent essays, which so admirably poses the difficulties of the genuine artist and genuine art in relation to the modern community.

At the present time, pure art is one of the freest and most servile professions. It is free in the sense that the artist is his own master; that he is not bound to any hieratic prescriptions and rules, beyond such technicalities as he chooses to acquire. Its servility rises out of the fact that art has become "free" and "pure" only by detaching itself from architecture, from interior decoration, from the lesser utilities, like pottery; so that art, divorced from the people at large, who—as Carlock sees—"had no homes and therefore no place for pictures," has become a genteel parasite, pandering more or less adeptly to the tastes of the rich. The artist must, roughly, either prostitute himself by creating petrified inanities that will sell; or he must live off someone who asks nothing in return, except what the artist may be ready to give out of his own bounty and vision. The first path is closed to the genuine artist; what is left is the "American conception—the slimy hermit working in a cave for immortality!"

If the artist achieves anything under the second choice, it is in spite of a deep inferiority complex which acts as a perpetual drain and deterrent upon anything he may set out to do. Mr. Craven is quite right, I think, in making one of Nettie's abiding virtues the fact that she appreciated Carlock, up to the limits of her feelings and intelligence; and Carlock's blind loyalty to this affectionate, loathsome Jezebel, in the face of odium, is quite intelligible: Nettie was in the same relation to Carlock, in the rôle of patron, critic, and public, as a sympathetic community would have been. Nettie is an outcast because she is a prostitute: Carlock is an outcast because he is not a prostitute—this is the fine irony that Mr. Craven tacitly leaves us to ponder. Is it any wonder that art is handled in the metropolis by bland undertakers whose chief services are to embalm and dress the dead? Our interest in an artist rarely manifests itself until defeat and frustration have left their marks upon the artist's character and his work—until the artist's body goes to the cemetery and his spirit to the Museum! Carlock's final bequest to Nettie was justice and wisdom itself: Nettie was still alive! I leave the reader to follow the implications.

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## A Correction

In Walton Hamilton's review of *The Analysis of the Interchurch World Movement Report on the Steel Strike*, in our issue of March 21, page 105, fifteenth line, "enlightened self-interest" should read "unenlightened self-interest."

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