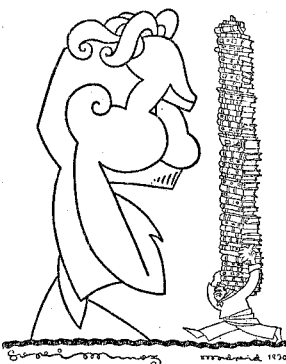


THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

by

HERSCHEL BRICKELL



HOW MUCH effect will our depression have upon the literary output? If the jest of the moment in Wall Street and elsewhere is true, its strongest influence will be in the direction of a considerable reduction through the starvation of

authors. Downtown they are saying just now, by way of adding to the Christmas cheer: "Wait until February, 1932, and we'll all be looking back upon 1931 as a boom year." This remark is quoted partly because it is very significant of the existing psychological state; people have reached the point where they dash eagerly about with every bit of bad news, and enjoy being miserable, a human trait that is never wholly absent. Already publishers are looking for ways to trim sail, and finding the most obvious savings may be made through combinations of sales and shipping organizations, a lesson learned in certain European countries long ago. In fact, on this point we have always been far less efficient than the Germans, the Dutch, or the French; what Mr. Hoover delights to call our "rugged individualism" so often gets squarely in the way of our equally vaunted efficiency. The direct

effect of these mergers and "understandings" among publishers, to come back to the question of what the depression is going to do to our reading matter, may in time mean a step in the direction of the long-discussed reduction in the number of new books produced. It may

conceivably mean a reduction in the average quality of the books published, not an improvement, as so many people seem to expect; it may mean more "merchandise" fiction, intended for department store sales and circulating libraries; it may mean an increase in the publishing of pornography. Naturally enough, all these possibilities will react directly upon authors, whose future as a race has been far brighter than it appears to be at present.

The Public's Inspiration

WHAT the public really needs, a serious-minded friend of the Landscaper said a few days ago, is inspirational literature at a time like this, something to restore faith, not necessarily of a religious nature, but earnest and inspiring. He added: "The publisher who succeeds in getting hold of some books of this sort will have a gold mine." The

Landscaper looked carefully around among the stacks of recent books for signs of best sellers of this variety, but they were lacking. Among the outstanding recent successes are three or four picture books, of which *Stag at Eve* is a perfect example, smoking-car stories in line and legend, some of them funny and some not so funny. This is the kind of inspirational literature the public really wants when it has a headache. *Stag at Eve*, in case you did not receive it for a Christmas present, is published by Farrar and Rinehart; it is the "sophisticated" humor of the *New Yorker* carried a step—in some instances, several steps—farther. It has been the cause of serious traffic congestion in recent weeks; in fact, oftentimes there have been many times as many people trying to read the jokes in bookshop windows than have been in the shops themselves. Other books of this variety, if you like picture books, are O. Soglow's *Pretty Pictures*, which has a good many drawings of the King, at present one of the favorite characters of a good many of us; *Peter Arno's Circus* (Liveright, \$3), which has several drawings that might have graced *Stag at Eve*; and John Held's *The Works of John Held, Jr.* (Ives Washburn, \$3). This last volume, which should bring many a reminiscent tear to the eyes of every one belonging, as does the Landscaper, to Mr. Held's own generation, is not helped very much by the quality of the reproduction of Mr. Held's wonderful engravings, but the artist's own work is first-rate. If this volume should bring on an attack of sentimentality, Russell Crouse's *It Seems Like Yesterday* (Doubleday,

Doran, \$5) is exactly the thing to go on with, a collection of pictures with appropriate text, that will set the memories flooding.

The Busy Way-outers

THE only excuse the Landscaper has for getting under way with a group of such frivolous works is that the public seems to want them. In many respects an even funnier list might have been made up of serious books about the depression. The way-outers are an ever-increasing crop, and if 1932 does succeed in making 1931 look like a boom year, it is safe to predict that several hundred volumes of this sort will be published during the next year, and that publishers will receive several thousand manuscripts solving all the problems of the period, which will be returned promptly to their eager authors. One of the most interesting of books of this general character is Paul M. Mazur's *New Roads to Prosperity* (Viking, \$2), Mr. Mazur being a practising banker and economist, who has at least done some thinking about the situation. Mr. Mazur dislikes Mr. Ford intensely, although they have a good deal in common in their thinking. Mr. Mazur still believes in the system that went to smash in 1929, mass-production and sped-up consumption, high wages, short hours, and all the other elements that went into the making of a machine that was a good one while it ran. He has little to say about a subject that is coming increasingly to the fore, namely, the more even distribution of earnings through higher wages and salaries. This is a topic that can be discussed with calmness, since it is so purely academic.

This unofficial and exceedingly uneconomic observer remains skeptical of the system, probably because of some underlying emotional opposition. At bottom, it needs something like Ellis Parker Butler's deliquescent book to make it work properly. Mr. Butler hopes to save the publishing industry with this invention, a book that will simply liquefy after a given time. At the time the brilliant idea was advanced, the Landscaper suggested that modern science should be able to make a book that would not only deliquesce, but deliquesce into something potable, which would seem to be the perfect combination. There may be a chance for a combination of the publishing and wine-brick industries. . . .

Real Values and Prosperity

DURING the boom times, which we can all remember by straining a little, there was an alarming loss of sight of real values, granting for the moment that there are such things. For example, the automobile industry reached its peak not because it was filling an actual need, but because, with the help of advertising, it had persuaded people that they must buy a new car every year, or oftener. People bought suits of clothes and threw them away not at all because they had fulfilled their function, but because the new suits had longer lapels or fuller trousers. So with hats and shoes, and radios, and electric refrigerators, and millions of other things. It should have been fairly obvious to any sensible person that a prosperity resting upon any such foundation was in constant danger. The real value in all these things was present all the

time, merely waiting to be recognized. We are finding out about real values at present. Shall we forget completely if a miracle sets our machine in motion again? Is there a chance that we may know anything like economic stability if the actual needs of the country will not keep our industrial system at work? (This might be a good time for a little lecture on the tariff, but the Landscaper must not stray too far from his own corner.) Naturally the whole fictitious scheme, which, it must be granted, gave the country an astounding period of prosperity, could not have been built up without the ballyhoo of advertising, a business with a pretty bad record on the ethical side, and which could still do with a clean-up. Its dishonesties are more subtle now, but they are still present. Mr. Mazur's book, to return to the starting point of this ramble, is an intelligent piece of work, and well deserves a reading.

Two Hours a Day

A MORE Utopian volume on the same general subject is *America's Tomorrow* by C. C. Furnas, of the faculty of Sheffield Scientific School, which is subtitled: "An Informal Excursion Into the Era of the Two-Hour Working Day" (Funk and Wagnalls, \$2). Mr. Furnas thinks we shall satisfactorily dispose of the problem of what to do with our leisure, although the use most of us make of our free time at present gives little ground for such optimism, and that our increasing efficiency will make it possible for us to get all our work done in two hours a day. Allowing an hour a day for conferences of one sort or another, this does

make the outlook for American business men very bright indeed, and it ought not to be too hard on the laboring classes. As a matter of fact, if Mr. Furnas could just arrange to have it brought about toward the end of the depression, it would be especially appropriate, for people who have had no jobs at all for two years or more could stand the new schedule without pain. The Landscaper would not give the impression that he is opposed on principle to cheerful books such as this, but he finds it hard to overlook the bitter irony of talk of a two-hour day when several million people in the United States would welcome the chance to work twelve or fourteen hours a day for bread and shelter if they could only find jobs. They are, one supposes, merely the victims of a period of transition, which is all right in the long view, but not much help to the victims. Long views are hard to take on empty stomachs.

The University of Chicago Press has recently published a highly provocative small book on *Unemployment as a World Problem*, the Norman Wait Harris Memorial Foundation Lectures, with John Maynard Keynes, Karl Pribram, and E. J. Phelan as contributors, the price being \$3. Mr. Keynes argues for the necessity of a mild type of inflation. The thesis of the book is that unemployment can not be satisfactorily handled without world-wide coöperation and that in time some form of super-government must be evolved if the problem is to be handled efficiently. This makes the outlook pretty gloomy just now, with tariff walls being shot skyward in all directions—modern science binds

the world together into a compact little bundle, making us all realize as never before that we are parts one of another, and then we raise economic barriers in every direction so as to check the free flow of goods, which some economists, at least, believe is fundamentally necessary to prosperity. In fact, when one looks back upon the passage of our most recent tariff legislation and thinks of its effect on world trade, it is hard to escape the blackest pessimism. (There, the Landscaper had to return to the subject, after promising earlier he would let it alone.)

First Aid to Pessimism

WHILE feeling pessimistic, suppose we read Frank H. Simonds' *Can Europe Keep the Peace?* (Harpers, \$3). The answer to Mr. Simonds' question is a thunderous NO! In fact, his book is so full of unrelieved gloom that a good many readers will feel, as did the Landscaper, that things never were quite so bad as they are represented here. Mr. Simonds has had remarkable opportunities for observation, and there are not many phases of human activity that will bear very close scrutiny without inducing pessimism in the observer. But the picture usually has another side. If, however, Mr. Simonds is a major prophet, we'd all better be collecting our fortitude, preparing to make hearty drafts on it during the impending months. Mr. Simonds insists that the Treaty of Versailles must be revised, and a good part of the world no doubt agrees with him, except the French, who hold the key to the situation.

For readers who are seriously

interested in France's mastery of Europe and its possible consequences, there is a remarkably fine book available, called *War and Diplomacy in the French Republic*, by Frederick L. Schuman of the Department of Political Science in the University of Chicago (Whittlesey House — McGraw-Hill, \$4). The subtitle is: "An Inquiry Into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy." There is an introduction by Quincy Wright. Professor Schuman is also the author of *The American Policy Toward Russia Since 1917*. He gives an admirable survey of the whole background of French foreign policy, sketches the building up of the existing colonial empire, and suggests hopefully that perhaps the League of Nations will be able to avert whatever of menace there lies in the current greatness of a militaristic nation. Since there is no more important factor in world affairs today than French diplomacy and foreign policy, this work should find many readers.

Other recent books in this general field that are interesting and valuable include *Germany Not Guilty in 1914*, by M. H. Cochrane (Stratford), a complete analysis of Bernadotte Schmitt's *Coming of the War, 1914*, and an attempted refutation of Professor Schmitt's arguments, with an introduction by Harry Elmer Barnes.

Count Dumba's Defense

MEMOIRS OF A DIPLOMAT by Constantin Dumba is a book almost certain to arouse controversy because of its presentation of the other side of the case of the War-time Austrian Ambassador to the United States. Little, Brown are the publishers and the price is \$4. Josef

Redlich of the Harvard Law Faculty has written a brief introduction, in which he points out the work for peace that Dumba has done during recent years, and hopes that American readers will be willing to give him a hearing. Count Dumba was a diplomat of long experience before he came to this country, and it is very difficult to believe that he could have acted so stupidly as it appeared at the time. His story is one of no small historical significance, and good reading besides.

The biography shelf yields some treasure this month, beginning with Philip Guedalla's *Wellington* (Harper, \$5), which is in Mr. Guedalla's most dazzling style, and which offers a detailed study of every phase of the life and character of its subject, against a well-executed background of the times. Much of the interest in the book lies in its later chapters, since Mr. Guedalla has emphasized the peace-time activities of the Iron Duke and has tried to balance accounts with the Whig historians who have been anything else but kind to their Tory enemy. There are minor flaws in the large volume — Mr. Guedalla is not very good at battles, for example — but the book is a very real contribution, a full-length of a fascinating subject for portraiture. Then there is *Bret Harte: Argonaut and Exile*, by George R. Stewart, Jr., of the faculty of the University of California, the first definitive biography of an American author whose life is curiously filled with contradictions. Perhaps it will come as a surprise that this chronicler of the life of the West was a good deal of a fop, and found life far more congenial in Europe than in this country. "He

wrote of frontier ruffians, but wore a monocle," is the way the blurb writer summarizes the situation. Harte was born in Albany, New York, and while he became one of the principal propagandists for California, really hated the State, or so Mr. Stewart reports on good authority. He lived twenty-four years in Europe, passionately American the whole time. Mr. Stewart has had access to many unpublished letters and other family documents, and has given us a thorough and comprehensive job. He has not yielded too far to the temptation to psychologize Harte, and has not attempted to weigh the value of the man's work, as he does not believe a combination of biography and critical study can be done with any degree of success. The Landscaper found his book extremely interesting and worth reading.

More About Maxim Gorky

THE life of another literary man, well removed in space and time from Harte, which is made the richer for the first-hand material it contains, is *Maxim Gorky and His Russia* by Alexander Kaun (Cape and Smith, \$5). The author has the advantage of close acquaintance with his subject. The later chapters dealing with Gorky's visit to this country with "a woman not his wife" are well done and highly revealing of the state of mind of Americans at the time. Mark Twain, it will be remembered, championed Gorky, and became the centre of a controversy that shook the nation by so doing. Gorky's amazingly self-revealing autobiography will continue to hold first place for some of

us, but Kaun's book is very valuable as a complement.

Those in search of information about potential candidates for the next Democratic nomination will find ample material. Ernest K. Lindley's *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Career in Progressive Politics* (Bobbs-Merrill, \$3) tells all there is to know about an admirable public figure; Frederick Palmer's two-volume work on *Newton D. Baker* (Dodd, Mead, \$7.50) is a fine piece of work, and, incidentally, admirable propaganda for the Ohio gentleman who is the Landscaper's choice for the next nomination. Baker's record will surprise a good many people, no doubt. Governor Albert Ritchie's life-story has not yet been told, so far as the Landscaper knows. On the other side of the fence, there are already a number of lives of Mr. Hoover available, and despite all rumors to the contrary, this observer does not believe it will be necessary to inform ourselves about any one else, not even Mr. Dawes and light-wines-and-beer. . . .

Mrs. Jefferson Davis

STUDENTS of Civil War History will find much of interest in the second volume of *Varina Howell, Wife of Jefferson Davis*, by Eron Rowland (Mrs. Dunbar Rowland), just published by Macmillan at \$4. This volume covers the war years, and especially with regard to Seward has Mrs. Rowland broken a good deal of fresh ground. There has always been discussion concerning the amount of influence Mrs. Davis exerted on her husband's policies and public acts, and Mrs. Rowland has interesting light to throw upon this

subject, as well as many others. Mrs. Davis was a woman of energy, character and intelligence, who knew life in all its transports and all its bitterness. A great deal of research has gone into the writing of this fine book, which is a permanent contribution to the history of a period that will have perennial interest for this country. Despite all that has been written about Davis himself, there are many questions about his character and personality that remain unsettled, and Mrs. Rowland helps us to see him from new angles. Mrs. Davis insisted upon having him greater than all those about him, and it is likely that this wifely vanity found a ready response in a man of great pride, much of whose strength lay in his certainty that he and his cause were right. Regardless of all this, however, Varina Howell is an interesting person in her own right and Mrs. Rowland has done a highly successful portrait of her.

One of the current biographies the Landscaper has not had a chance at, but which occupies a position high up on his list of unread books, is Frank Harris's *Bernard Shaw* (Simon and Schuster). Once a good many years ago, the Landscaper went to hear the redoubtable Harris lecture one Sunday afternoon in his Ninth Street quarters. The subject announced was "Jesus and Shakespeare," and Harris talked for two hours about himself. This was typical of his whole career. He was an egomaniac, beyond question, and one hears that he remained an egomaniac to the end. But a book by Frank Harris in collaboration with Shaw could not be other than highly entertaining; its mere existence is remarkable enough, and

Shaw's help in putting out so revealing a volume another tribute to his honesty, or his passion for publicity. Speaking of Harris, Faro, Incorporated, have published *The Private Life of Frank Harris* by Samuel Roth, who is the head of the company just mentioned. Mr. Roth is a stormy petrel; he has often been in trouble with the censor, and deservedly, at least in some instances. He knew Harris, but most of his book is borrowed from Harris's own writings, including the autobiography, which now outsells *Ulysses* to Americans in Paris. It is, in fact, an astonishing attempt to take advantage of the talk that has gone on about the psychopathic revelations of Harris; Mr. Roth is also the publisher of an expurgated edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and of a sequel to the Lawrence novel. He is likewise the publisher of *The Strange Career of President Hoover* by John Hammill, a scurrilous attack on the President that is being read by more decent people than one might expect. There ought to be something to say about Mr. Roth, but the Landscaper can not think of the words, except that he and his kind make things very hard for other authors and publishers who believe in free speech. It is a disagreeable subject: Let's leave it, but not without noting the dedication to *The Private Life of Frank Harris*, which reads "To Clement Wood, the only other man in America I know who could turn this trick." President Hoover has said nothing about suing for libel, but Clement Wood should. . . .

Word has just come in of the suppression of the Hoover book, which is hardly a loss to history or literature.

Mr. John Winkler Again

OTHER recent biographies that have passed this way without receiving as much time as they would seem to deserve include Charles C. Baldwin's *Stanford White* (Dodd, Mead, \$3.50); and John R. Winkler's *Incredible Carnegie* (Vanguard, \$3.50). The Landscaper thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Winkler on the subject of Rockefeller and Morgan, and he has probably done as good a job with the Scot he has somewhere characterized as a "greedy little gentleman." There is a fine air of irreverence in Mr. Winkler's approach to his models; he can look a stack of gold dollars right in the eagles without a trace of knee-bending, and this is a healthy attitude. There has never been any reason for taking our millionaires seriously, unless we are ready to admit that an overdose of the predatory instinct is the most admirable thing in life.

Perhaps there will be a chance later for the *Stanford White* book. Speaking as one who has had many moments of pleasure from the surviving buildings of White, and as one who has often felt a sense of distress that most people know him only as the man killed by Harry Thaw, the Landscaper knows he would enjoy a sympathetic biography.

One of these days we shall need a large library to hold the books about Abraham Lincoln. Considering the fact that he lived a good deal less than a century ago, the amount of "hitherto unpublished" material concerning him that turns up every few months is simply astounding. In fact there is so much published already that there seems very little

chance to know the man, and we might as well reconcile ourselves to having him a myth. These remarks are prompted by the appearance of a two-volume work by Emanuel Hertz called *Abraham Lincoln: A New Portrait* (Liveright, two volumes, \$10). There is an introduction by Nicholas Murray Butler. Mr. Hertz worships Lincoln, so his findings do not offer any titillating scandal. His industry is prodigious; is it possible that still more Lincoln material exists?

Important Novels to Come

THIS is between-seasons for fiction, but there will be plenty along in due time. The Landscaper hears, for example, that such distinguished novelists as James Boyd, Julia Peterkin, Manuel Komroff, Louis Bromfield, Isabel Paterson, and a half dozen others of equal interest, are well enough along with books to be reasonably sure that we shall have the pleasure of reading them in 1932. Christopher Morley's *Swiss Family Manbattan* (Doubleday, Doran, \$2), a novelette in satirical vein, is already at hand, and offers the material for a pleasant evening. It is the story of a journey to the United States by a Swiss clerk in the League of Nations offices, with his family, consisting of a wife and two sons. Their airship is wrecked and they find themselves marooned high in the air on a skyscraper under construction. The clerk becomes a lecturer and his wife a speakeasy proprietor; later they open a filling station and hot dog stand, and settle down to be good Americans. This is a deft tale, with a good deal of sly humor, but its satire does not cut

very deep, and it will not greatly enhance its author's reputation. It is his first novel since *Tbunder on the Left*. That most remarkable author, Ben Ames Williams, who is able, apparently, to turn loose his entire 267 pounds in producing fiction, has done a readable tale of an opera singer in *Honeyflow* (Dutton, \$2.50). Starting with the story when the singer is an orphan in New England and tracing her career to the end of her days at the Metropolitan, Mr. Williams manages to produce a credible portrait of a woman of genius; the author has made his reputation with popular stuff, but he can actually write better and more interestingly than a lot of his highbrow and more pretentious fellows.

Off to a rousing start is Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday* (Harper's, \$3.00), a patchwork history of the Nineteen Twenties, written by a gentleman, who like a lot of the rest of us, lived through the period. This is a better title than Mr. Crouse's *It Seems Like Yesterday*, which belongs to a more remote period: the Twenties were only yesterday, but Mr. Allen knows that they seem much, much farther off. Time moves very quickly nowadays, partly, no doubt, because physical points of orientation disappear overnight, and ideas on many subjects change just as fast. Mr. Allen has used the Mark Sullivan method in writing his history of the Twenties, and the scornful may call it journalism, but it is good journalism; indeed, the Landscaper is not convinced that it isn't better history than accounts of political and military campaigns. Mr. Allen even

writes about Coolidge prosperity, and what he says has a far-off ring as if he were discussing a period of inflation in the valley of the Ganges, 5000 B.C. . . . His is an enjoyable book and deserves the success it is certain to have.

Comments on the Stage

ANOTHER book that will interest intelligent Americans is R. Dana Skinner's *Our Changing Theatre* (Lincoln MacVeagh-The Dial Press, \$3). Mr. Skinner is the dramatic critic for that fine Catholic Weekly, the *Commonweal*. He has a point of view; he thinks the theatre would be better off for a return to the romantic tradition, with glamour. He has spent some thirty years observing American plays, and so writes from a background of experience. His prose is chaste and ordered, clear and logical, so that it is a pleasure to read him, whether one agrees or not.

Still another distinctly American book that heartily deserves reading is Fred T. Pasley's *Muscling In* (Ives Washburn, \$2). Mr. Pasley wrote an excellent biography of Mr. Al Capone. He knows a lot about gangsters and racketeers. *Muscling In* is an account of the advance of this gentry from a connection with such illegitimate industries as rum-running to pretty nearly every industry of any importance in the country. Books of this sort ought to evoke a good deal of indignation on the part of the citizens whose pocketbooks are hit by the racketeers; at any rate, here is the evidence. Mr. Pasley believes that Prohibition helped racketeering to get a hold on the country which is rapidly becoming so tight that not

even a revocation of the Volstead Act would enable us to smash it. Prohibitionists will not enjoy *Muscling In*. Mr. Pasley believes the racketeers get a good deal more than enough graft every year to take care of all our unemployed and leave something over. He has done an alarming and valuable book; if somebody doesn't do something about the situation the fault will not be his.

A Wise and Funny Book

OTHERWISE, the Landscaper gazes upon a miscellaneous collection of books on a very wide variety of subjects. Before going on to these, he asks for a chance to mention again the funniest book of 1931, and one of the wisest, Will Cuppy's *How to Tell Your Friends from the Apes*. Mr. Cuppy is recognized as an excellent reviewer of detective stories and a humorist of parts; he has never had anything like his due as a philosopher. It will not be news to the followers of this department that the Landscaper is but little impressed with the run of contemporary philosophers, but Cuppy is another matter. He is practical, although it can not be denied that there are metaphysical implications in many of his remarks about birds and animals, or about "Modern Man, Or The Nervous Wreck." It has been said that the answers to all the problems of existence are to be found in Mr. Cuppy's new book, which may be a slight exaggeration, but there are plenty of answers to plenty of questions, and many a good laugh besides. It is not often that the Landscaper pleads with his clients to spend money, but

How to Tell Your Friends from the Apes is worth what it costs, and will be even if by the time this is published we have gone off the gold standard.

One of the handsomest of the year's books in trade editions is Paul Rodier's *The Romance of French Weaving* (Stokes, \$10), a book which the Landscaper picked up without any feeling of burning interest, and which he found at once was not at all easy to lay aside. M. Rodier, whose own fabrics are widely known, has soaked up everything there seems to be to know about weaving in France, and has used his material to excellent advantage. There are many fine illustrations and if you did not use the book for a Christmas present, make a note somewhere that any friend you have who is intelligent and curious would enjoy owning a copy.

A Variety of Books

THE *Romance of Transportation* by Allison Hawks (Crowell, \$3), is an admirably done volume on all forms of transportation, with many pictures; *Through the Dragon's Eyes* by L. A. Arlington (Smith and Long, \$5) is a first-hand account of fifty years' service by an Englishman in the Chinese Navy, Customs, and Postoffice; *Strange Intelligence: Memoirs of the Naval Secret Service* by Hector C. Bywater and H. C. Ferraby (Smith and Long), is an interesting account of a branch of the service about which very little is known by the public; and *Radio and Education, 1931* (University of Chicago Press, \$3) is a record of the proceedings of the National Advisory Council of Radio in Education which

should interest a good many people. Some of the remarks of men like Millikan about the possibilities of radio in education inspire the Landscaper with terror; what a dreadful instrument of propaganda is the radio! Granted that it has wonderful potentialities in education, greater, perhaps, than anything since the invention of the printing press, it is hard to be optimistic when one observes some of the things that have happened because of Gutenberg's invention, and its concomitant, universal literacy. It is well, however, that educators plan to make some

practical use of the air; after all, it should not be entirely filled with advertising matter.

A book of very general usefulness to the population of America is *Getting a Divorce*, by Isabel Drummond, a lawyer who lives in Philadelphia. It is published by Knopf and contains all the information any one might need, a practical handbook, in other words, and quite interesting to read as well. It might do as a gift to some of your friends whose bonds are beginning to gall, although the etiquette of such matters is still somewhat doubtful.



The Reader's Turn

A Department of Comment and Controversy

Agnostic Retort

BY HARRY ELMER BARNES

I NOTE that Dr. Gaebelein returns to the fray in the December issue of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* with his usual urbanity and an article of appropriate title.

I am quite willing to leave the essentials of the argument with my original article, but it might be worth while to sprinkle a few drops of clarifying water to settle the dust and give readers a precise glimpse of the terrain traversed.

(1) Dr. Gaebelein charges that I fail to grasp "the easily verifiable effect of rebirth and conversion."

I have not challenged the remarkable transforming effects of religious experience. I have only demanded that these phenomena be subjected to the scrutiny of scientific psychology and their real character understood. Doctors in the time of Hippocrates and Galen knew that men were sick, but they had little or no knowledge of the real causes and nature of the maladies. Dr. Gaebelein cites the "blind man at the pool of Siloam" as though this were a verifiable historical episode, when the most elementary knowledge of history and Biblical scholarship would indicate that the presumptions are all against any such hypothesis. All the scholar of today insists is that we understand that religious experience, however transforming, is the product of secular psychological factors in the human personality, not the result of divine revelation or mediation.

(2) Dr. Gaebelein falls back upon missions as a definitive proof of the reality of religious experience.

No sane person doubts the powerful effect of supernaturalism over the minds of men — even over so excellent a mind as that of Dr.

Gaebelein. Certainly supernaturalism is tremendously potent with simple primitives. Their pre-Christian supernaturalism has already done fearful and wonderful things with them. As another version of supernaturalism, Christianity may certainly transform their lives, but so can and does Mohammedanism, Buddhism, New Thought, etc.

Nor is the fact that the Bible has been translated into 900 or more languages any significant contribution to human progress, if one holds that the reading of the Bible in any language is of little consequence in our Twentieth Century civilization, and that parts of the Bible could not well exert other than a harmful influence on any thoughtful believer. If missions could demonstrate the translation of the more important works of Wells, Havelock Ellis, Stuart Chase and others into 900 languages we might be far more gratified.

I am no apologist for Anthony Comstock, but the burden of proof is on Dr. Gaebelein to show that Paul was possessed of any more healthy or powerful mind than Anthony, and he certainly did not possess any more fierce energy in carrying out God's will as he understood it.

It may be conceded that John Chalmers did good in New Guinea. So could any devoted and decent man, whether a Christian or not and whether in New Guinea or New Mexico. What the pious Chalmers did in New Guinea was thoroughly matched by what the skeptic, Robert Owen, did in New Lanark a century and more back.

The Abels may have taught the natives that "head-hunting, infanticide, and ceremonial cannibalism are actually sinful and thus outrageous in the sight of a loving Heavenly Father." But it may be doubted whether the Abels gave them instruction in