

# Ministration

By DAVID MORTON

LET me remember, now, how day by day,  
These loved, familiar, constant things return:  
The morning at my door, and the slow way  
Of dusk that kindles the low stars to burn;  
Beyond my window, summer's changing round  
Of early bloom and late will come and go,  
And winter evenings ending with no sound,  
Hushed in the wide, white silences of snow.

So, day by day. . . . And some unreckoned year  
Will find me standing as a lover stands,  
Waiting a twilight that will touch me, here,  
Familiarly, like tender, straying hands, . . .  
And in some secret way I cannot tell,  
It will be well with me . . . it will be well.

## The Story of a Country Town

Some Curious Contacts Revealed in the History of Cornwall, Connecticut

By DON C. SEITZ

THE backgrounds of many incidents that loom large are often set in obscure and unnoticed country towns. I have frequently felt the urge to compile a gazetteer of the great that would list the humble beginnings of many eminent men or the preliminary incidents of notable events. This reflection is revived by a perusal of "A History of Cornwall, Connecticut, a Typical New England Town," just published by the Rev. Edward Comfort Starr, who for twenty-eight years filled the Congregationalist pulpit in the community.

There are five Cornwalls in the United States, named after the Cornish county at the tip end of England. The Cornwall in New York gained distinction by being for many years the home of Dr. Lyman Abbott. Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Virginia each harbor a town of that name.

The Cornwall of Mr. Starr's narrative is a rough township in Litchfield County, about thirty-eight miles northwest of Hartford, with a population of around twelve hundred souls. It borders the rapid-running Housatonic. Mount Mohawk towers one thousand six hundred and eighty feet imposingly in its midst. From its hard soil came Thomas Porter to become a judge of the Vermont Supreme Court, whose son, Ebenezer, was President of Andover Theological Sem-

inary. In the neighborhood, called Dudleytown, was born Mary T. Cheney, the public-school teacher who was to be the very unhappy wife of Horace Greeley. Heman Swift, a brigadier in the Revolution, was much trusted by George Washington. Most notable, however, is the fact that here was the nest place of the Allens. Four of them were with the valiant Ethan at Ticonderoga. He was a resident of Cornwall before he became a Green Mountain Boy and the creator of Vermont. From Cornwall Ethan went to the great French and Indian War. Mr. Starr recalls the little-noted fact that in February, 1784, Allen, as a second venture, "married a beautiful and accomplished woman, twenty-three years his junior, whose portrait has been preserved by Copley, while none exists of her famous husband." There were three children by this marriage, the eldest of whom, Fanny, died a nun in a Canadian convent—a strange end for a freethinker's daughter. Ethan, in local tradition, is "said to have stood on his father's unmarked grave" in Cornwall "and appealed to him to return and tell whether there was another life." The father, Joseph Allen, had six sons. After Ethan, Ira was the most eminent. He planned and endowed the University of Vermont, at Burlington, and is recalled as "one of the handsomest men of his time," possessing at the same time much better

manners than his famous brother. Another of the six, Levi, became a Tory and died in jail at Burlington, in 1801, a prisoner for debt.

Matthew Lyon, another celebrated disturber of dry bones, though born in Ireland, lived for a time in Cornwall, and was married there. He became a member of Congress from Vermont, was mixed up in many broils, befriended Aaron Burr, and ended his days in Arkansas. Major-General John Sedgwick, killed at Spottsylvania, was the first in fame of a long line of Cornwall soldiers after Ethan Allen. He is buried at West Point, but Cornwall possesses his sword and a fine memorial. Of minor soldiers, judges, educators, and clergymen the list is legion. The Rev. Samuel Scoville, who married Henry Ward Beecher's daughter Harriet, was a son of Cornwall. So was the late E. B. Whitney, who became the best of judges on the New York City bench. He married Josepha Newcomb, daughter of Simon Newcomb, the astronomer. She is now a leading citizen of New Haven. Theodore Frelinghuysen Vaill, who made the Winsted "Herald" an outstanding country weekly, was another Cornwall product. Besides editing the "Herald" he wrote a comic translation of Virgil's *Æneid* that is classic in its merit.

So much for local eminencies. There are farther-reaching items to record. In



From "A History of Cornwall, Connecticut," Rev. E. C. Starr, publisher

An offshoot from the old First Church, the Second Church of Cornwall, Connecticut, built its meeting-house, which bears a Christopher Wren spire, a hundred years ago in North Cornwall. The interior of this building has been renovated and the building was rededicated recently—the 14th and 15th of August

1817 there was established at Cornwall a Foreign Mission School, the outgrowth of some one, variously said to be E. W. Dwight or Samuel Mills, finding a dark-skinned youth on the steps of Yale College one morning in 1810, weeping because he could find no way of getting an education. President Dwight having heard his plea, he was sent to Litchfield, where various good clergymen did the best that could be done for him. His name was Obookiah, and he was a stray from the Hawaiian Islands. He became quite famous in a way, and others followed him to America, the newcomers calling for education. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were interested, and the Congregationalist pastor at Cornwall, Rev. Timothy Stone, persuaded the people to donate the village academy, which was soon filled with strange pupils from round the world. Here gathered Kanakas, Hindus, Chinese, Malays, and single students from Oteheite and the Marquesas. Obookiah acquired an excellent education and assisted in shaping the new school. He died February 17, 1818. The distinguished Lyman Beecher preached his funeral sermon. He is buried in Cornwall.

Numbers of American Indians attended the school. Two of these had notable careers and a tragic end. They were Elias Boudinot and John Ridge. Boudinot, after leaving school, spent two years at Andover Theological Seminary, but was not ordained. He helped to prepare translations from the New Testament into Cherokee, and also edited a hymn-book. Returning to Georgia, he set up a printing-press and published the "Cherokee Phoenix," partly in English and partly in the native alphabet devised by Sequoyah, whom we have honored in naming the big trees of California.

The agitation for removing the Cherokees to the Indian Territory was under way, and Boudinot, with John Ridge, who had become a lawyer, and prosperous, joined others in signing the treaty that led to the Nation's accepting the only alternative against destruction. One John Ross led the opposition. The Government enforced the treaty, which the Ross party deemed illegal, and, guarded by soldiers, among whom was the then First-Lieutenant John Sedgwick, the Indians were forced to remove. It is a black spot in our history. As a result Boudinot and Ridge were assassinated.

This was the end of all they had attained of learning and civilization at Cornwall.

Boudinot had married Miss Harriet R. Gold, of Cornwall, who had acquired the missionary spirit. The wedding of red and white made a great stir locally. Boudinot was burned in effigy. She died August 15, 1836, before the hegira, and was buried at Calhoun, Georgia. Boudinot now married a relative of his first wife, Miss Delight Sargent. She came East after his death, conducted a school at Troy, and survived until February 21, 1893.

The school came to its end after a prosperous season, as the result of a missionary desire to build up schools in heathen lands. The idea was opposed by Dr. Lyman Beecher, but Jeremiah Evarts, father of William M. Evarts, sided with the missionaries, and they carried their point. So a plan to enlarge the school, for which the bricks were baked, was abandoned. Mr. Evarts was at the time Secretary to the Board of Foreign Missions.

Nothing happens in Cornwall now. They do not appear even to dismiss their ministers. Mr. Starr, who resigned in 1915, was the thirteenth incumbent to serve since 1740.



# The Book Table

Edited by EDMUND PEARSON

## Reviewing the Reviewer

THE history of literature, said somebody (I believe it was Richard Grant Moulton), is the history of the triumph of authors over critics. There are few generalizations with such a large percentage of truth. The work of critics and of writers of book reviews, when it has been correct, has usually been forgotten. Their blunders live forever. Time and again writers of reviews, often themselves the authors of books, have either violently denounced or gently ridiculed the works of authors whose names are now glorified, while they have extravagantly praised men and women whose work was totally forgotten within a generation.

Despite their many mistakes, writers of reviews inspire a remarkable amount of interest. Hundreds of persons long to write book reviews, and seem to consider such writing the most fascinating of all occupations. Publishers and authors, however much some of them may pretend to indifference, are capable of a good deal of excitement upon the subject. And there are many who are writers neither of reviews nor of books, neither publishers nor editors, who look seriously upon book reviewing, and willingly engage in conversation about whatever this, that, or the other publication may have said about Mr. Thingamajig's new novel.

It is related that two men on an elevated train in New York had a bet as to whether every second person they met was writing a play. As they got off the train one of them turned to the conductor, saying:

"How's your play coming along?"

Without a quiver of his face, the man in the blue coat returned:

"Why, I'm having an awful time with the third act."

I have little doubt that the story is true—artistically, at all events. Certainly, there seem to be few cities where, on the street, on trains, or on street cars, you may not overhear some one say to another:

"Did you see what Blank said about Doodab's book in this week's 'Old Republic'?"

The constant discussion of Blank's opinion of Doodab, of Doodab's reply in defense, of Floppit's counter-attack on Blank, and of Nynkum's unexpected rally to one side or another, show that many persons regard the matter as of no

slight importance. One of the best of the literary reviews lets the author reply to his critic, and the critic come back at the author, and other friends or enemies join in the row, for weeks thereafter. Often the original subject of debate is entirely lost in the shower of brickbats which fairly darkens the sun for days and days. I think that this is rather silly. Unless some absolute error of statement, or some important misquotation, occurs in the review of a book, the author who replies is wasting everybody's time. If Mr. Jones, a book reviewer, does not like Mr. Smith's novel or book of poems, Mr. Jones has a right to express his opinion. Mr. Smith has asked for that opinion by sending a copy to Mr. Jones. It is as foolish for Mr. Smith to try to argue the other around as it would be for him to try to make Jones take sugar in his coffee in the face of his profound distaste for it.

There never has been an entirely satisfactory book-reviewing publication, and there never will be one. New reviews begin from time to time, and they satisfy the critical for six weeks at the longest. At the end of that time they have stepped upon at least a hundred toes. They have praised three or four books which a score of highly respectable and cultivated persons are firmly convinced are extremely shocking, or mediocre, or idiotic. And they have denounced or jeered at two or three others which the same number of good citizens have taken to their hearts as they would a darling child. Henceforth these citizens have no recourse except to say, regretfully:

"Ah, there used to be good book reviewing—once upon a time, long ago, in the dear, dead days!"

Did there? And were people satisfied with it when it was printed? Brander Matthews writes that he once heard so much about the excellent book reviewing of the golden past that he resolved to read some of it. He bought a forty-year file of a weekly "of lofty pretensions," and in the course of the next year turned every page in that regiment of volumes. The result was a disappointment.

"The book reviewing was painfully uninspired, with little brilliancy in expression and with little insight in appreciation; it was disfigured by a certain smug complacency which I find to be still a characteristic of the paper when-

ever I chance now to glance at its pages. But as I worked through this contemporary record of the unrolling of British literature from 1830 to 1870, what was most surprising was the fact that only infrequently indeed did the book reviewers bestow full praise on the successive publications which we now hold to be among the chief glories of the Victorian reign, and that the books most lavishly eulogized were often those that have now sunk into oblivion."

It is important to remember the mistakes which the writers of reviews have perpetrated. It is well to bear in mind the outrageous attack upon Keats in the "Quarterly Review." It should not be forgotten that the "Saturday Review" condemned "Bleak House" as a "paltry, dry bundle of nonsense." As Mr. Matthews further pointed out, critics formerly looked only to the past, they rarely understood the present, and they distrusted the future. They were often at a loss in the presence of an original genius, and more apt to be right in their opinions about authors of the second rank.

Neither the writer nor the reader of book reviews should take the matter too seriously. As the same sagacious critic whom I have already quoted twice has very usefully remarked, criticism is a branch of literature, but book reviewing is a branch of journalism. With many kinds of books—scientific and historical writings, for example—there are some nearly absolute standards of criticism. But with a work of the imagination, if the writer of a review says he enjoyed it, there is as little sense in making complaint as there would be in engaging in a dispute with him because he prefers chocolate ice-cream, while we are sure that vanilla is the only flavor fit for consumption.

Mr. Albert Mordell has made an unusually interesting and useful book, under the title "Notorious Literary Attacks."<sup>1</sup> It consists of about fifteen examples of the occasions when critics—often, rather eminent critics—have made conspicuous fozzles. Here is Lockhart's attack on Leigh Hunt, "Blackwood's" *versus* Byron, a horrified American gentleman on the subject of Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," and John Morley against Swinburne. In his very able introduction Mr. Mordell points out

<sup>1</sup>Notorious Literary Attacks. Edited, with an Introduction, by Albert Mordell. Boni & Liveright, New York. \$2.50.