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Points of View

Again a Protest

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

May I protest ruefully that the writer of the article entitled "Prep School for Rotarians," published in the *Saturday Review* of November 7, seems to have based his sweeping condemnation of leading magazines for boys on a surprisingly superficial study of these magazines. His conclusions are likely to astonish those who know the magazines—and mislead those who don't.

I myself am both astonished and puzzled. It is hard to understand how even a man who makes his analyses on the doublequick could feel justified in describing the *American Boy* as a magazine "in which the successful boy invariably is the one who makes more money than any other boy in town, and in which an editorial by Frank Crane or a poem by Edgar Guest is the acme of editorial enterprise."

The answer to any such statement is, of course: Read and see. We hope that thoughtful adults who are genuinely interested in boys' reading will do so. The reader who makes a comprehensive survey will find much to make him question the sweeping statements in "Prep School for Rotarians." He will find, for instance, in recent issues of the *American Boy*, Charles Nordhoff's story of "The Pearl Lagoon," pronounced by a representative group of the critical librarians of the country one of the finest boys' books of the year. He will find "Quinby and Son," by William Heyliger, a father and son story that has won wide recognition. He will find James Willard Schultz's Indian stories, written with a distinction that has found favor with discriminating literary critics; Gilson's "Jack-Without-a-Roof," an outstanding story of the French Revolution; and many other stories, long and short, as well as many articles and other special features, that directly disprove the statement I have quoted. The thoughtful reader may even conclude that the *American Boy* is doing something to help in the development of this much debated thing so glibly called "literary taste."

As I have said, I hope that thoughtful adults will wish to investigate further the matter of boys' reading, and that some will find time to make a careful study of the *American Boy*. Those who do will undoubtedly have some valuable suggestions to make to us. We hope so; we welcome criticism. But we do maintain ruefully that a critic should read a magazine carefully before he criticizes it.

GEORGE F. PIERROT,
Managing Editor, *American Boy*.

Food for Thought

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

Has it occurred to any of the readers of "The Professor's House" and "Barren Ground" (both of which have been most ably reviewed in your columns) that they deal with the same psychological situation? In both books there is a vital personality, an ardent lover of life whose problem it is to learn how to "live without delight." For anyone concerned with that problem these two books offer rich food for reflection.

Dorinda, the heroine of "Barren Ground," after the utter failure of her love affair, determines never again to take the risks inherent for her in an emotional participation in life. She finds in work, interminable back-breaking work, a drug by which to while the years away. In making the barren ground yield fruit she receives some compensation for the barrenness of her personal life. This is Miss Glasgow's answer to the question of what can be done with a vital personality for whom the possibility of joy is gone.

Miss Cather's book, "The Professor's House," is a more richly conceived presentation of the situation. The Professor has had two great adventures, the adventure of marriage with the woman he loved, and the adventure of writing the book he longed to write. In addition he had had the priceless treasure of a friendship which lent warmth and value to his daily life. The book describes the slow process by which, in middle life, he comes to the realization that he has nothing left worth living for; he and his wife have grown apart, his book is finished, his friend is dead. Nothing remains of the intense zest which has been to him synonymous with life itself. It is only after a long strug-

gle that he accepts the fact that what he calls the "bloomless side of life" is all the future has for him, but he does accept it. He even sees that it has admirable qualities of its own. Perhaps it is because of the richness of his earlier experiences that he seems better able than Dorinda to meet a cheerless future.

The reader is left to ponder the question whether for most people it is tragic to have to live without delight. Many seem to accept the loss of capacity for either extreme joy or extreme suffering with tranquillity, almost with gratitude. Perhaps, as vitality lessens with the passing years, they cannot spare the energy for emotion. Is it only a small minority who share with the Professor and Dorinda the sense of infinite loss?

MARGARET C. WARREN
West Roxbury, Mass.

A Chinese Writer

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

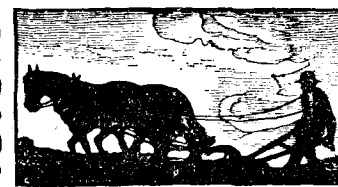
I am impelled to write and beg that "The Most Famous Beauty of China," the story of Yang Kuei-fei, by Shu-Chiung, be not weighed merely as a book about a royal courtesan, a person already celebrated in legend and drama. It is a little book. And the English of it is at times quaint. But it is a very special performance. It marks the entrance of a Chinese woman writer who has never been in an English-speaking country into the field of English writing, without the aid of an Occidental collaborator. It therefore deserves, I believe, special consideration aside from an evaluation of it according to the authenticity of its sources. Too much that has come from Chinese women, and is still coming from Chinese women, is sweetened and distorted to suit the Western conception of the Orient, by the employment of Occidental collaborators.

Because the Chinese woman has figured little in the records of the country, in verse, in the arts, and because she apparently figures little even today in the truly Oriental social life her figure is always especially intriguing. On this account I think that Shu-Chiung should be warmly welcomed. She can write. She proposes to devote herself to gathering from original sources what she can of Chinese women of the past. It is to be hoped that she will also apply her straightforward, unaffected style to an interpretation of contemporary Chinese women. Such first-hand contributions are much needed during this period when the West is feebly and belatedly seeking to understand the East, and is compelled to accept as final the opinions of foreigners or completely foreignized Orientals.

It may interest you to know that Shu-Chiung is famous for her personal beauty and is also a person of great originality. She is, as far as I know, the only cultured Chinese woman who has had the courage to revive the costumes of the Ming Dynasty rather than to accept outright the Western skirt, which when worn with a typical Chinese jacket forms the fashionable dress since the beginning of the Chinese Republic.

CAROLINE SINGER
Harmon-on-Hudson.

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P. T., New Mexico; R. V., New York;
L. E., Columbus, O.; L. P. D., New
Jersey, ask for a choice of plays for
holiday production, for children or
grown-ups. I have already told them to
send for Samuel French's catalogue, but
here are some in book-form.

PERCIVAL WILDE'S "The Enchanted Christmas Tree" (Appleton) and "The Toy Shop" are ideal one-acts for home or community production. A. A. Milne's "Make Believe" is in his "Second Plays" (Knopf) but is also printed separately by French; it strings a series of episodes into an evening's entertainment but may be taken apart into several amusing and easily-given little plays. After editing a collection of "One-Act Plays for Young Folks" (Brentano) in which there is a charming one by John Farrar, Moritz Jagendorf brings out this year five sparkling playlets of his own in "Fairland and Footlights" (Brentano). The familiar collection of "Holiday Plays for Home, School and Settlement" (Dodd, Mead), by Virginia Olcott, has been carried on by her "Holiday Plays" (Dodd, Mead) in which is "A Puritan Christmas"; these may be given with the least possible preparation.

There is a George-and-Dragon play in the second volume of S. L. Cummins's three books of "Plays for Children" (Doran) which makes it especially appropriate for this time of year, but at this season any good play in which children take part gladly is appropriate; for instance, "The Magic Sea Shell and Other Plays," by John Farrar (Doran), and a new volume by Stark Young; "Sweet Times and The Blue Policeman" (Holt), "Old King Cole," by Josephine Krohn (Doran), is a set of amusements in mediaeval dress inspired by Mother Goose, who, I maintain, has more and better dramatic action per poem than is found in the work of most contemporary playwrights. There is an amusing and easy Christmas play in J. W. Foley's "Sing a Song of Sleepy Head" (Dutton), and "The Dyspeptic Ogre," in Percival Wilde's "Eighth Comedies for Little Theatres" (Little Brown), is for children; and so are the excellent plays in "Ten Minutes By the Clock" and "Three To Make Ready," collections published a year or so ago by Doran. Better keep this list at hand and send me additions to it, that have been tested in performance, for in a few weeks the questions about plays for amateur production will be rushing in, as they always do at the beginning of the year, and this is a sifted selection for young performers.

H. D., Jersey City, N. J., asks for stories to read aloud at Christmas time, at length or in condensed versions.

BOOOTH TARKINGTON'S "Beasley's Christmas Party" is now bound with his "Cherry" in one volume (Harper) appropriate to the time, so is the new edition of two famous family stories of Grace S. Richmond, "Christmas Day in the Morning" and "in the Evening" (Dodd, Mead), bound together. "The Holly Hedge" is a new set of Christmas tales by Temple Bailey (Penn), and for verses to read aloud there is a new anthol-

ogy gathered by Margaret Widdemer, called "Yule Fire" (Macmillan).

"Somewhere in one of the volumes of Voltaire," writes A. H. M., New York, "is a story about a Dr. Akakia—I can't swear that the name is exactly spelt, but that is the sound—... (here he names four high authorities) have been unable to aid me; if the good physician is to be found I am sure that you can tell me where I can find him, in French or English."

FAITH so touching should meet reward. The original owner of the name was a lecturer at the Collège de France, Docteur Martin Sans-Malice: his surname, as will be seen at a glance of the intellectual eyes that make a practice of reading this column, is the same as the Greek AKAKIA, so he used this instead until his death in 1551. Just 200 years later Voltaire found it an excellent descriptive pseudonym for his "Diatribes de Docteur Akakia," a lampoon against Maupertuis. This was promptly and publicly burned by the executioner in 1752, but Voltaire saved one copy and republished it with a supplement. I simply had to print this reply instead of sending it by mail: once in a while I need to show off.

L. B., Newark, N. J., asks if there is a book for Boston on the order of Helen Nicholay's "Our Capital on the Potomac" (Century) and Wiltach's "Mount Vernon" (Doubleday) for Washington.

ROBERT SHACKLETON'S "Book of Boston" (Penn) has been for some years the best known. This season there is a revised and enlarged edition of Annie Haven Thwing's "The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston: 1630-1822" (Lauriat), with plenty of plates and maps, making a delightful town history. It gives a reader something the same warm thrill Hamlin Garland describes when, in "A Son of the Middle Border" (Macmillan), he tells of his first visit to the city of his dreams. There is a brilliant book on Boston just from Houghton Mifflin, "Beacon Hill," by Allan Chamberlain, at once a survey and a history, with impressive pictures. The Boston enthusiast or the book collector anywhere may get it also in an extra illustrated edition at a price affording room for expansion of local pride. Mary C. Crawford's "Romantic Days in Old Boston" and "Old Boston Days and Ways" (Little, Brown) have a large and devoted audience—many a copy has gone out after relatives in distant parts—and there are drawings by Lester Hornby in Edwin Bacon's "Rambles Around Old Boston" (Little, Brown) that show the picturesque quality as the text brings out the historic and antiquarian features. Porter Sargent, whose "New England" (Sargent) is the standard handbook for this section, announces a guide book, "Boston," for publication early in 1926, uniform with the other handbook and with maps, directories, and any amount of detailed information. And for the dreamer there is a poet's tribute to what the city has meant to Western country, in Vachel Lindsay's "So Much the Worse for Boston," a lasting ornament to his volume called "Going to the Sun" (Appleton).

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