

Books of Special Interest

Scottish Speech

SCOTTISH SPEECH AND POETRY
Scottish Poems of Robert Burns in his
Native Dialect. By SIR JAMES WILSON.
New York: Oxford University Press.
1925. \$2.50.

THE NORTHERN MUSE. An Anthol-
ogy of Scots Vernacular Poetry. Ar-
ranged by JOHN BUCHAN. Boston:
Houghton, Mifflin Co. 1925. \$3.
Reviewed by WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON
Smith College

IN SPITE of the pre-eminence of Scottish poetry among the literary products of the various dialects of English, scientific study of the sounds and idiom of the northern vernacular has lagged behind that of the speech of some of the southern districts. More than a century ago a foundation for the study of the vocabulary was laid in Jamieson's Dictionary, but a remaking of this work in the light of modern linguistic scholarship is long overdue. About fifty years ago, Dr. J. A. H. Murray gave a model for the necessary preliminary local studies in his "Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland," but imitators in other sections have been slow to appear. Meantime, the local dialects are passing, and there is a risk that unless vigorous action is taken, the spread of Board School English will have destroyed the possibility of gathering the requisite data.

Fortunately there is evidence that note is being taken of the emergency. Mr. William Grant and his collaborators have already shown that scholars with adequate equipment are in the field, and ten years ago, Sir James Wilson paralleled Dr. Murray's work with a study of the speech of Lower Strathclyde. In 1923 he followed this with "The Dialect of Robert Burns as spoken in Central Ayrshire." Assuming that in the hundred and forty years since Burns published his first volume, the speech of his native county has changed little, Sir James Wilson has studied this speech in the mouths of old people who have never lived elsewhere and whose lives stretch halfway back to Burns. The present volume is an edition of Burns's best known poems, accompanied by a phonetic transcription, and a free translation into modern English. Thus for the first time it is possible for a non-Scotch reader to learn to pronounce Burns's words very much as the poet did. There remains, of course, the very important element of intonation and modulation which can still only be heard from those who have spoken the dialect in childhood, but what Wilson has done was very much worth doing, and he has done it in scholarly fashion.

In accounts of the dialect of Burns's Scottish poems, it is usually assumed that they are written in the speech which Burns used and heard at home. This assumption is somewhat rudely shaken by Mr. John Buchan in the introduction to his new Anthology. Burns (he says) is by universal admission one of the most natural of poets, but he used a language which was, even in his own day, largely exotic. His Scots was not the living speech of his countrymen, like the English of Shelley, and—in the main—the Scots of Dunbar; it was a literary language subtly blended from the old "makars" and the refrains of folk poetry, much tinged with the special dialect of Ayrshire, and with a solid foundation of English, accented *more Boreali*. No Scot in the later eighteenth century, whether in Poosie Nensie's or elsewhere, spoke exactly as Burns wrote.

At first sight this theory, if accepted, might seem to render futile such labors as those of Sir James Wilson in the book just described. But Wilson's contribution is largely a matter of phonetics and Mr. Buchan does not mean to imply that Burns did not intend his countrymen to pronounce his words according to their usual custom. He is thinking mainly of vocabulary and idiom, and even in this field he is not so radical as he sounds. In spite of an incautious phrase he would probably allow that no Englishman in the early nineteenth century spoke exactly as Shelley wrote. Most poets go afield hunting for fine words, rich in sound or association, and most poetry is tinged with the archaic and exotic. In the vernacular revival of the eighteenth century, Ramsay, Fergusson, Burns, and the rest salvaged many a word and phrase from the older national poetry, and they selected as all artists select. The fact that during the seventeenth century

Scottish had declined as a literary medium made the language used in the renaissance somewhat more apart from colloquial speech than is normally the case; but I am inclined to think that the difference is more one of degree than of kind, and to feel that Mr. Buchan over-emphasizes when he says that Burns's diction "was a creation, not the reproduction of a speech still in the ears of men."

All of this has little to do with the merits of Mr. Buchan's Anthology. It is, as an anthology should be, a labor of love, and the editor frankly admits it was made to please himself and with no other purpose. It is arrayed according to subject, and is a delight to browse in. I know of no collection of Scottish verse with so high a percentage of cream. The glossarial footnotes give what is necessary for understanding, and the commentary supplies clues for further reading and contains much pleasant philosophizing and acute criticism. Altogether a delightful volume.

Pepys the Man

SAMUEL PEPYS: A Portrait in Miniature.
By J. LUCAS-DUBRETON. Translated from
the French by H. J. STENNING. New
York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1925. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILBUR C. ABBOTT
Harvard University

FROM a surprisingly small list of books M. Lucas-Dubretton has written a surprisingly entertaining account of the diarist Pepys. A pretty considerable acquaintance with Gramont, a knowledge of Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature," a dip into Clarendon and another—astonishing enough—into Neal; a dash of Macaulay and, oddly enough again, of "Roderick Random"; a well-worn quotation from Carlyle to grace a footnote; these have been drawn to garnish the dish with a spice of references. But first and last the "Diary" of Samuel Pepys. Not all of the "Diary," chiefly that part which is more or less scandalous, seems to have provided him with his material; and the least creditable part of it with the impression he leaves of the great Secretary.

It is no part of a historian, not even of a reviewer, to gloss over the escapades of the great, the near great, or of any one else. Yet it would be far short of the truth to take this portrait of Pepys as a true one. It is, as it were, only the seamy side of the canvas. It is, if one may venture to consider such a lively trifle seriously, a little out of date. If the author knew more of Pepys than he has put in his book—and he evidently knows a great deal more—he might have made this a better account of even the man Pepys than it is, for even that man had his greater side. It would not have been so amusing from one point of view, but it would have been not only more truly interesting, and a very much better piece of portraiture. It is now fashionable to exhibit the greater figures of the world in undress, to stress the littleness of the greatest. We are—so one learns—to have the worst of Greville spread for our edification. There is a whole crusade to denigrate men and women of the past. Scandal has become a profitable publishing item, one must judge, and indiscretion the first qualification of authorship.

But as for Pepys, entertaining as the author's pages are, great as is his literary skill, novel as it may seem to those who have not read the "Diary," the current rather runs the other way just now. One may not venture to say with the greatest living Pepysian that "the 'Diary' has always been overrated," but it is certain that in the light of that scholar's own work as well as that of others, this figure which M. Lucas-Dubretton gives us is, as it were, a bit out of drawing, viewed as a portrait. That, he may well claim, was not his purpose. He draws what he sees in the "Diary," supplementing it from what sources he likes. It is not his purpose to instruct but to amuse. And if Pepys was the kind of a man he has portrayed himself, if he did the things he did, and was foolish enough to set them down, if an audience may be entertained by the raking up of the *chronique scandaleuse* of Charles II, why insist that Watteau should paint battle-scenes or Fragonard the virtuous employments of the worthy poor? It is ungracious and unkind; it is even the part of dull respectability to insist that a lively picture should look like a man. One must pay homage to M. Lucas-Dubretton's literary skill; yet one need not therefore agree with him that he has turned it to the best use. For surely here, if ever, the evil

that Pepys did lives after him, the good has been interred with his bones. Even for a miniature this portrait is too small.

The Russian People

THE SHADOW OF THE GLOOMY
EAST. By FERDINAND A. OSSENDOWSKY.
Translated by F. B. CZARNOMSKY. New
York: E. P. Dutton Co. 1925.

Reviewed by PITIKIM SOROKIN

Author of "Leaves from a Russian Diary"
IF Ossendowsky's books are taken as fiction then his "Beasts, Men and Gods" and "Man and Mystery in Asia" are absorbingly interesting and valuable. Taken as scientific description his books do not warrant the praise and commendation that they do from the standpoint of fiction. "The Shadow of the Gloomy East" furnishes proof of this statement. The book, which has a somewhat romantic title, represents an attempt to characterize the Russian people. This characterization is quite worthy of a second class newspaper man. Ossendowsky stimulated, it seems, by the success which the "mysteries" and "romanticism" of his preceding books had among readers, continues to supply them in this book. In order to get these "mysteries" and exotic things he proceeds very simply. He chooses the beliefs or customs which existed three hundred years ago in Russia and describes them as existing now. The traits which belong to few individuals or to a small group, he ascribes to the Russian people generally. Is it strange therefore that the Russian people in his characterization appear as "mysterious," "Asiatic," "hostile and dangerous to mankind" or as "the naked man upon the naked earth," like "the Russians" whom I have seen occasionally in the American movies?

According to Ossendowsky the Russian villages are full of wizards, sorcerers, and hags. Everywhere there are shamans and fortune-tellers. A special caste of "poisoners" has been cultivated in this "mysterious" country. According to this description the industry of horse stealing was highly developed in Russia. Even such a common thing as transportation by horses—"yamshchina"—he has succeeded in depicting as "a mysterious relic of olden times." Simple fishermen, under his too vivid description, are transformed into "sinister, wildly romantic characters—the buccaners." This characterization demands further that there be "the brutes and cave men," mediæval floggers, mystics, and utterly immoral heroes. Ossendowsky meets this demand and creates "the devil's feast," "black ravens," and "old gods." In brief, if I try to characterize the American people by taking the Mormons' customs as typical of the American family, the adventists as the representatives of American religion, the Negroes as the American race, the Loeb and Leopold case as the proof of the existence in America of a "highly developed kidnapping industry" and so on,—my picture of the American people would be as good as Ossendowsky's picture of the Russian people. His book is a good "story" for a magazine section of a perfectly "yellow" newspaper.

This review could be finished at this point if there were not one charge conspicuously stressed by the author. This is the extreme brutality and cruelty ascribed to the Russian nation as a characteristic trait. We have heard the same statement from many friends of the Soviet rulers who in this way have tried to justify the cruelties of the Soviet régime. How far is this statement true? I think it is quite erroneous. It is true that the cruelties of the Russian revolution have been terrible. But all great revolutions—the Greek and the Roman, the German, French, Bohemian, English, and many others—were accompanied by the same degree of bestiality. In this respect the Russian revolution is not an exception. But, we may ask, who performed these cruelties in the Russian Revolution? The author himself points out that among the troops of the Cheka were Russians, Jews, Letts, Poles, Hungarians, Germans, Chinese, and the dregs of all nationalities. Who compose the Third International or the Soviet Government? It is composed not so much of the Russians as of these dregs of all countries. The Russian people have been the victims rather than the authors of the terrors. Was it not from Western Europe that the Marxian theories were imported into Russia and applied there by Marxian pupils? Where, in Asia or in Europe, did that brilliant example of "Christianity and humanism" styled the Great War originate? Taking into consideration these and many similar facts—among them comparative statistics of crimes and punishments

in Russia and European countries before the revolution—we must say that Ossendowsky's accusation is at least hypocritical. If there were not in Russia at present so many foreign "saviors" and "Kulturträger" in the form of Soviet rulers, foreign communists and socialists, pro-bolshevik writers and sympathizers, adventurers, and profiteers of all countries, the process of normalization and moral and mental regeneration of the Russian nation which has already begun would proceed much faster.

American Annals

A SHORT HISTORY OF AMERICAN
PEOPLE. By ROBERT GRANVILLE CALDWELL.
New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
1925. \$2.50.

Reviewed by RALPH V. HARLOW
Boston University

IN view of the recent increase in the number of these briefer histories of the United States—brief at least in comparison with Professor Channing's monumental work—it may reasonably be expected that a new offering of the sort will be marked by certain attributes of peculiarity or excellence, by something at least to distinguish it from others of its kind. People who have read, and libraries which have bought, "short histories" of similar scope may well ask on what grounds they should be favored with another.

The author of this latest contribution, Professor Robert Granville Caldwell, modestly, and sensibly, makes no special claim to distinction. His publishers, less modestly, offer the book as "at once an economic, political, and human interpretation," which takes into consideration "all the data that recent research has brought to light." The book itself proves to be a good, clear summary, or full outline, of the majority of the standard episodes in American history, from the European background to the eve of the Civil War. If critics carp at the omission of the Spanish Armada, for instance, or at the barest possible reference to William Lloyd Garrison, they may be silenced by the retort courteous: what do you expect in five hundred pages? Anyway, if some of the regular stock in trade is omitted, no disconcerting new exhibits are allowed to appear.

The section dealing with the colonies and the American Revolution will probably attract unfavorable comment, for here the author reveals no adequate grasp of his subject. The meeting of the first House of Burgesses did not by any means prove that "the Colonists had gained the right to govern and tax themselves," nor was South Carolina a "rice plantation" at the start. As for Chapter VI, "The Rising Quarrel," it might have been pieced together by anybody with the help of Montgomery's "Leading Facts" and a few other equally reprehensible elementary texts. The account of the Boston Massacre is merely poor, but the unsupported assertion that public opinion held Governor Hutchinson responsible for it is absurd. Then come the old stories of Franklin's "full dress suit of spotted Manchester Velvet," of the tea in Charleston left "to rot in a warehouse," and, later of Ethan Allen's demand for surrender "in the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress." The inclusion of these shopworn fragments would not in itself damage the work, even though they are not true; but the whole chapter is made up of generalizations, every one of which is open to serious question.

The period after 1783 is handled with more evidence of knowledge of facts, and of familiarity with "recent research," although an occasional curious blunder crops out here. The War of 1812, the struggle with Mexico, and the controversy over slavery are in general well done. And twice in the book, once in the summary of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and again in the analysis of the figures for the presidential election of 1860, the author puts old material in a new light.

But the volume as a whole lacks character. It will give the reader no information that he cannot get just as easily, and more entertainingly, somewhere else; it will not stir his emotions, nor arouse his enthusiasm. It is marked neither by profundity of thought nor by brilliancy of generalization. The style is clear, but uninspiring, there are no epigrams, no vivid characterizations, no phrases or sentences that one feels impelled to quote, still less to remember. It is an example of mediocrity, not distressing, but of little real worth, not vivid enough for the general reader, and not informing enough for the scholar.

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Books of Special Interest

The Drama of Man

CHAINS. By HENRI BARBUSSE. New York:
International Publishers. 1925. 2 vols.
\$4.

Reviewed by V. F. CALVERTON

HOWEVER inadequate as a novel and unscientific as sociology, "Chains" is one of the most unique creations of the chaotic post-bellum years of our century. Where "Light," "The Inferno," and "Under Fire" fell easily within the category of the novel, "Chains" bafflingly evades all of the flexible nomenclature of literary classification. Despite its prose form, it is a poetical interpretation of the historical struggles of humanity. Suffering from what seems almost an infinitude of redundancies, the book, nevertheless, achieves in places a symphonic resonance of style and a vigorous analysis of social substance. Incoherent and bewildering in structure, it attains a unity of sentiment if not of situation.

"Chains," according to its author, attacks "directly the whole tremendous drama of man deployed across the centuries; (it) stirs the science of history, its complexity and obscurity, its jungle of cyphers and of names whose meaning has been lost." It is "the terrible homogeneity of history" that Barbusse attempts to picture in such wild, impassioned, and dithyrambic diction. The work is a protest against the cruelty and injustice of life and civilization. It is the chains that fetter man, that thwart life, which obsess the author's fancy, evoke his wrath, and aggravate his denunciations. A socialist, Barbusse is opposed to all war unless it be in the interests of the submerged classes of society. Like Rolland he attacked this past war with the vehemence of a prophet. The political intrigue and commercial chicanery involved drove him to attack every nation concerned, in fact the entire industrial system which has fettered man's hopes and perverted his ideals. In "Chains" Barbusse points this industrial society as in a twilight state of dissolution. The struggle of the many against the few, of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, harbingers the end of contemporary society, the conclusion of another social system. Barbusse's radicalism is unabashed and courageous. The hope of man lies in the Social Revolution. The advance of the human race demands the upheaval and extermination of capitalistic society. It is "a collective life that is at stake," a collective system that is exigent. Until the "vast mass has everything, it will have nothing."

Mingled with its radical pronouncements and annihilating logic, however, is an element of profound skepticism. While the wild cry "Workers of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains" resounds through page after page of the epic, beneath it all there is ever rising and protruding the more philosophic if less practical issue: "What are we here for, here on earth?" Barbusse effects no clairvoyance, projects no answer. With all of the faith in the mass and the reconstruction of life through a new society, there is an inescapable melancholy that pervades the volumes, a vivid apprehension of the pain and torture of impermanency, death. "And the more we meet in each other's eyes, the more we think of death, for death will embrace all."

Perhaps no contemporary work can be said to possess a more sweeping and profound motivation. Yet with all of its magnificence of design, its epical extensity and power, as a novel "Chains" is not a success. It is without distinction of character or continuity of theme. Its very poetic extravagances and intellectual divagations weary by multiplication and tautology. The intense beauty of fragments is marred by the barrenness of wide stretches of description and argument. A severe condensation of substance would have given the book a finer appeal and its interpretation a deeper meaning and cogency.

Linguistics

WORDS AND IDIOMS. By LOGAN
PEARSALL SMITH. Boston: Houghton
Mifflin Co. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by LOWRY CHARLES WIMBERLY
University of Nebraska

A WRITER on linguistics is usually a hero to no one, not even to a college president. Such a writer we are likely to felicitate not at all, that is, unless we chance to be specialists in philology. Even then we may have in mind nothing more than what a tremendous deal of work is represented between the covers of the book. We congratulate the author on having coming out alive. A work of this sort is in danger of being damned if it is readable. The expert neglects it; the lay reader lauds it, and in his praises justifies the opinion of the expert. The moral is that one should not make easy that which is difficult, or interesting that which is notoriously unentertaining. Was Professor Huxley's reputation helped in academic quarters by his ability to talk simply about profound matters? Anyway Mr. Smith scents danger and puts his book frankly outside the philologist's special field of inquiry.

Equipped, as he says, with whatever erudition a lexicographer may be supposed to have, Mr. Smith has written a book which may come within the interest of the man who does not know Sanskrit and who has never heard of Gothic. Not that the specialist will fail to take pleasure in "Words and Idioms." Such a one, if not utterly fossilized, will find something in the chapter on English sea terms and that on the English element in foreign languages. In any event, Mr. Smith's pages will revive for the scholar the romance of philology, the poetry of it. For the tyro it will have an effect similar to that given by a first view of astronomy. It will lure the beginner on to the higher levels. Astronomy is, for the amateur, a mixture of classic mythology, speculations about the Martians, and the distance in light-years between us and the farthest star. But it is possible to get along without Verner's law and higher mathematics while accompanying Mr. Smith on his linguistic adventures.

This deliver after words digs down into our old sea-vocabulary and examines those deposits of sea-terms left in the language of English sailors. He finds a stratum of Anglo-Saxon or early English words, such as *gangway*, and *fore* and *aft*. The Scandinavian layer of our nautical vocabulary is represented by *keel*, *raft*, and *tug*, as well as by a number of other terms. By way of France come the Homeric *dolphin*, *prow*, and *ocean*. There are elements also from Latin, Arabic, Italian, and Dutch. The conglomerate character of the English language prevails in its nautical terms, as elsewhere, and Mr. Smith's sailors give our borrowings dramatic portrayal. But we have lent as well as borrowed; witness the author's chapter on "English Words Abroad." A tiny and elfin history of literary criticism is acted out by the word *romantic* in another chapter, "Four Romantic Words." The section "Popular Speech and Standard English" discourses charmingly on dialects. The last chapter is a highly profitable discussion—amply illustrated—of English idioms, and there is an appendix containing two hundred "Somatic Idioms," expressions having to do with the head, the hair, and so on. In the preface Mr. Smith acknowledges his debt to the "Oxford Dictionary," to Dr. Jespersen, and to Remy de Gourmont's "Esthétique de la Langue Française." And throughout the book there are other learned references to assure the reader that "Words and Idioms," though entertaining, is not without sound scholarship.



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