

## Points of View

### Reviewing Reviewed

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

Like many others, doubtless, I have read with mixed emotions the article entitled "American Sagas" in a recent issue of the *Saturday Review*, in which Zane Grey is relegated to his proper niche, in the cellar of the Temple of Fiction. This article accentuates the query which is becoming more and more acute and insistent as to the proper function of present-day book reviewing, the wisdom of the methods employed, and the actual value of literary criticism of this sort.

Let me offer from the article in question a single illustration of the careless and superficial exercise of censorial authority which reviewers are so prone to display.

In support of his allegation that Grey is lacking in knowledge of human nature, the writer declares that "nothing is more curious than his view of sex. In 'Riders of the Purple Sage' a young man and a girl live alone together for weeks in a secret canyon; in 'The Lone Star Ranger,' the hero rescues an innocent girl from bandits and roams about Texas with her for a long time—as harmlessly as in 'The Færie Queene' Una and the Red Cross Knight go traveling together. Nothing shows more clearly how far away is his world from actuality; his Texas is not in the Union but in Fairyland."

In one of these cases the hero had killed a brute in defense of a young girl, and himself grievously wounded, to escape the vengeance of a band of cut-throats and save the girl sought safety in flight. They did not "roam all over Texas" (apparently in his enthusiasm the reviewer drew somewhat on his imagination and did not consult his geography). Actually they were alone fifteen days; during nine of which the hero lay in a hut at the point of death, delirious for the most part, and during another three days was convalescent at the home and under the ministrations of a rancher and his wife. For just three days they traveled towards a settlement—riding by night and resting and sleeping by day.

In the "Riders of the Purple Sage," after unwittingly shooting a young girl, for days thereafter Venters devotes his sleeping and waking hours towards saving her life; and to safe-guard her from a band of robbers and thieves is compelled to hide in a secluded valley. Impressed by the girl's innocence and purity, he falls in love with her and determines to make her his wife if fortunately able to escape, in which ultimately he is successful. The occurrence is only an episode of the main story—introduced to supply the motive for the exercise of a sublime self-sacrifice by the protagonist of the play.

Now let us suppose that the Buck Duane of the Texas story had been an ancestor of the reviewer (although, of course, such a supposition is preposterous); with what filial indignation would the reviewer execrate the suggestion that his forebear was incapable of the character and manhood displayed by the unfortunate girl's protector and naturally would have dishonored the innocent object of his solicitude! And in the other case let us suppose that to the reviewer himself had fallen the part of Venters in Surprise Valley; how enraged he would have been at the insinuation that the young girl could not possibly have passed the days of her convalescence and subsequent enforced concealment with him and retain her virtue!

Even if we must concede that 999,999 men out of a million (personally I do not accept this as the proper proportion) would have acted dishonorably under the circumstances mentioned, what is strange and curious as to views of sex and indicative of ignorance of human nature in Grey's refusal to select his hero from the near million and choose instead a man of whom the reviewer's father and the reviewer himself respectively might be taken as the antetype?

In the first and one of the most successful tales of adventure ever written the hero and heroine passed through the most amazing adventures in their wandering from Delphi to Ethiopia—from beginning to end the woman remaining an exemplar of female chastity, her escort of upright manly virtue. And in comparison with the debauchery and evil ways of life in Egypt and along the Upper Nile in the second century, when Heliodorus wrote his "Ethiopian Romance," the immorality and lawlessness of the Texas and Utah of Zane Grey's period were as twilight is to blackest night. Heliodorus was not a psychologist, nor was

he a stylist—as is alleged about Zane Grey by our reviewer. But his work endures as a masterpiece in fascinating story-telling and only recently it has been republished as one of the widely read "Broadway Translations."

Generally speaking, book reviews may be grouped in three classes. In the first class are those which embody conclusions that the subject under review is absolutely wanting in merits of any sort, its writing, publication, reading, or other recognition a waste of time and money—excepting, of course, the compensation of the reviewer. The second class is made up of those occasional instances—in number so very, very few—when the fortunate writer has fully measured up to the understanding and lofty ideals of the reviewer, and consequently has won a place among the immortals. The third class, including perhaps ninety per cent of the annual harvest which falls within the purview of the craft, comprises those literary ventures in which the lack of style, the false ideals, the ignorance of human nature, the general aimlessness, and myriad other faults of the author are pointed out with the assurance and certainty of a master—fianlly qualified by an admission, or at least implication—that to certain ones not so gifted as the reviewer the book may have a passing interest if not actually appreciable value.

### More Zane Gray

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

I am (*Gott sei dank!*) no authority on the novels of Zane Grey, but I cannot agree with Professor T. K. Whipple's praise of them in "American Sagas," issue of February 7th. True, we are given a long list of Mr. Grey's faults: unreal characters, melodramatic plots, stilted dialogue, a naïf conception of sex, crude ethics, and lack of a valid philosophy of life. But, says Professor Whipple, we should ignore these deficiencies and praise the good qualities—narrative power, sincerity, and powerful imagination.

"Mr. Grey," we are told, "does not dodge big scenes in which plot and passion come to a head." That is exactly what he does. In "Riders of the Purple Sage," admittedly his best work, there are more than fourteen instances where scenes of varying importance are related after the event. The characters are continually saying, "Let's talk a while."

"I'll tell you what I know. . . . Tell me about yourself. . . . Tell me what happened. . . . Wal, now, jest let me talk. . . . You see it was this way. . . ." That's not narrative power; that's easy writing. There are twelve bits of gun-play in the book, and of these only four are dramatically presented. There are four potentially big scenes of cattle-rustling, of which only one is dramatically presented. Of three important meetings of heroes and villains, only one is presented dramatically; and all three end ludicrously with a cowering of the villains by the heroes without the firing of single shot. "Then he finished, an' by this time he's almost lost his voice. But his whisper was enough. . . ." Mr. Grey dodges his big scenes two-thirds of the time and usually falls down badly when he can't dodge.

The second quality, sincerity, is meaningless as a standard of literary criticism. What if Mr. Grey is "genuine and true to himself"? So are thousands of poetasters and execrable minor prosists. I myself play the piano with sincerity, but that fact does not pacify my neighbors.

Of Mr. Grey's third good quality, a powerful imagination, I must confess ignorance. I cannot recall ever hearing anyone cite a single example of his "heroic myths." I refuse to admit that he is epic merely because he is crude and simple. He ranks not beside Homer, but rather with the other writers of clean, unsexed, adventurous stories for boys, with such authors as G. A. Henty, Frank Merriwell's creator, Stevenson, and Conrad.

Like Howells and Miss Cather, Zane Grey lacks the power of dramatic presentation, but he also lacks their style. Like Dreiser he falls into clichés, but he lacks Dreiser's extensive pity. He is fond of brute force, but he lacks the intensity of London and Frank Norris. He handicaps himself with the critics (though not with the public) by emphasizing the element that normally interests them least—descriptions of nature. He seems notable only as an inspiring example of what may be done with sincerity and meager talents.

Professor Whipple says, "The negro

spirituals have arrived; why not the ballads of cowboys, lumberjacks, and Kentucky mountaineers?" Surely he is not ignorant of the arrival of these very heroes, Davy Crockett, Paul Bunyon, Tony Beaver, and a company of others. He must certainly know of the collections of Dr. Louise Pound, of John Lomax among the cowboys, of J. C. Harris's Cherokee tales of B'r'er Rabbit, of Frank Cushing's Zuni folk tales, of C. C. Jones among Georgia Negroes, of Mrs. Christensen in South Carolina, of Mrs. O. D. Campbell in the Southern mountains, of Mrs. E. F. Waterman in Nebraska, of Professor P. S. Lovejoy's Bunyon tales in Michigan, of Miss Loraine Wyman, Miss Josephine McGill, and Percy MacKaye in the Kentucky mountains, and of numerous papers in bulletins of ethnological societies, museums, and the U. S. Government. Here are real heroes and epic qualities and memorable myths—American sagas indeed!

W. L. WERNER.

State College, Pa.

### A Word for Nashville

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

The ignorance of the Englishman with regard to things American is as proverbial, I suppose, as the sensitiveness of a Southerner in the face of criticism. I am willing to incur the latter reproach if by so doing I may suggest that Mr. Robert Graves in his review of Mr. Ransom's "Chills and Fever" has done a grave injustice to Nashville when he says that it is "a byword in the States for comic provincialism," and adds: "As here in England one need only say 'Wigan' and the gallery of any variety theatre will rock with sophisticated mirth." Mr. Ransom, I feel sure, joins me in protesting against so palpable an error, even though it was meant to enhance the significance of his noteworthy and arresting volume.

Nashville has its full share of Babbitts and some of the characteristics of Zenith City or "Wigan"; it has a Broadway that might well be called Main Street. But I dare say that for its size it may well compare favorably in its nationalism and its culture with other cities in these States. Its educational institutions—Vanderbilt University, Peabody College for Teachers, Ward Belmont College for the whites, and Fisk and Meharry for the negroes—draw students from all parts of the country by reason of large endowments and resources. It may be a surprise to even the intelligent readers of the *Saturday Review* to know that these institutions at this present moment are spending several million dollars in the furtherance of educational plans, and that they have as high standards of admission and graduation as similar institutions elsewhere.

But it may be justly retorted that education does not always lead to genuine culture. Well, it so happens that the department of English in Vanderbilt University has on its staff four men who are doing literary work of a rather high order. May I ask how many English departments in the country have produced within one year such noteworthy volumes as "Chills and Fever" so favorably reviewed by Mr. Graves and Donald Davidson's "An Outland Piper?" These two poets and some half dozen others at the University have done valiant service in maintaining for several years *The Fugitive*, generally recognized, I believe, as one of the most significant poetry magazines of the country; and—*mirabile dictu!*—most of its financial support has come from business men in Nashville, who though they cannot always understand the poems that are published have been willing to give substantial support to so worthy an enterprise. Some of us discovered "Poems about God" before Mr. Graves—or even Mr. Morley. These poets have not been Ishmaels nor Bohemians in their own community, but have been recognized by the educational institutions and literary clubs of the city. Under the leadership of Mr. Davidson they have conducted a literary page in the Nashville *Tennessean* that is highly creditable.

The Centennial Club has brought to Nashville during the past few years some of Mr. Graves's own countrymen—Masefield, Noyes, Robert Nichols, Chesterton, Hugh Walpole, Swinerton—and many of the most prominent American writers. Their coming was not simply the conventional lyceum or chautauqua performance, but afforded the opportunity for bringing together in a social way a large number of cultivated people of whom this city has more than its quota. A unique feature of Nashville's cultural life is the large number of men's clubs—town and gown clubs—that discuss questions of real import.

And, not to make this letter too long, I mention as indicative of the real culture of

Nashville: we are just finishing an exact reproduction of the Parthenon, under the supervision of Zolnay and two of the most accomplished sculptors in the country; we have a symphony orchestra of seventy pieces that gives concerts of the highest order; and the Fisk Singers—not only the quartette that has just returned from a visit to England (I hope for the sake of his æsthetic soul that Mr. Graves heard them), but several hundred of the student body—are nowhere more appreciated than in their own city.

Altogether we are making progress in literature, music, and art. We have two first-rate bookstores where one can find the very latest utterances of the most advanced *intelligentsia*. One of the owners told me the other day that he sells every month fifty copies of the *American Mercury* (I wonder if Mr. Mencken knows that this is happening in the "Sahara of the Bozart"). Yes, and I almost forgot that many of us read and talk about the *Saturday Review*, enjoying the favorable comments on our poets and novelists, reveling in evidences of its cosmopolitan culture, and hoping that we may grow out of our comic provincialism, under the tutelage of such poets as Mr. Graves, and such critics as Mr. Mencken.

I think I may claim for the people of Nashville that we are the citizens of no mean city. An English poet, Mr. Robert Nichols, exclaimed at the end of a visit in the suburban section of the city in the Spring time: "You have here a combination of rural England and Greece!" I saw the other afternoon a sky line of towers and spires that made me think—forgive the blasphemy, Mr. Graves—of Arnold's lines on the sweet city with her dreaming spires; but these towers were whispering, not the last enchantments of the Middle Ages, but the latest enchantments of the modern world.

EDWIN MIMS.

Nashville, Tenn.

## The Readers' Guide

(Continued from preceding page)

Nijhoff, The Hague. The first volume of this library is a version of "Lancelot of Denmark," translated by Dr. P. Geyl of University College, London. They are faithful renderings of the originals, and very remarkable specimens of early European drama, "Lancelot" and "Esmeroit" being the work of a fourteenth century poet.

The Englishman John Bowring published in 1824 a little volume of 242 pages under the title "Batavian Anthology: or, Specimens of the Dutch Poets," which contains in the notes pre-faced to each selection some information about seventeenth century literature. The same field is covered by my book on "Vondel, the Poet," which will soon appear in the "Great Hollanders" series published by Scribner.

Dr. Barnouw's forthcoming work is a study of the great tragic dramatist, Joost van der Vondel, most illustrious of Dutch writers; preceding volumes in this series were "Erasmus the Humanist," by Professor Huizinga of the University of Leyden, and "William the Silent," by Frederic Harrison. Another promised book from Scribner will be of interest to this correspondent, though indirectly: "Zelide," the heroine of the biography with that title by Geoffrey Scott, was Madame de Charriere, the lady whom Boswell wanted to marry and a member of the Dutch nobility.

"The Fortunes of a Household," by Herman Robbers (Knopf), is a recent translation from the Dutch that I named in my question, so it was not included in the reply; it is a study of the gentle decline of a middle-class wealthy merchant's family, and the beauty and interest of the work lies in its rare comprehension of the quality of family affection. But, of course, the Dutch writer of the present day best known in America is Louis Couperus, all or almost all of whose novels are published in English by Dodd, Mead, and whose popularity, slow-growing, but now arrived at considerable proportions, is a credit to the American reading public. It would be hard to find more subtle beauty than in the four volumes of the "Book of the Small Souls" and the story of the morbid and fascinating folk who make its family life so enthralling, nor has terror often reached a higher pitch in recent literature than in certain chapters of "Old People and Things That Pass."

The Bibliographical Society of America is planning the publication of monographs on definite subjects similar to the series which the Bibliographical Society of London has been issuing for some years. Among the forthcoming publications is "The Colonial Printing Office," by L. C. Wroth, whose "History of Printing in Colonial Maryland," has taken its place with the most valuable American bibliographical records.



# The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

## HALLIFORD EDITION OF PEACOCK

GABRIEL WELLS of this city is publishing a new edition of the "Works" of Thomas Love Peacock in ten volumes. Four volumes have already appeared. These include Vol. II, "Melincourt," printed from the first edition of 1817; Vol. III, "Nightmare Abbey" and "Maid Marian," from the Bentley edition of 1837; Vol. IV, "The Misfortune of Elphin," from the first edition of 1829, and "Crochet Castle" from the Bentley edition of 1837; and Vol. V, "Gryll Grange," from the first edition of 1861. Facsimiles of all of the title pages of these volumes, together with textual changes and bibliographical notes accompany each novel. Vol. I will contain a biographical and critical introduction and "Headlong Hall"; Vol. VI and VII, "Poems"; Vol. VIII, "Plays"; and Vol. IX and X, "Miscellaneous Prose." This edition contains much prose and verse never published in book form before, together with important material printed here for the first time. This will be called the Halliford edition and the format will be a tall post octavo, printed in large type, on good paper, bound in red cloth, limited to 675 sets for England and America, and the type distributed. The only collected edition of the works of Peacock hitherto issued was in three volumes, edited by Sir Henry Cole and published by Bentley in 1871. This edition is textually imperfect and incomplete. Peacock made considerable revision of his books in his last years and such variants Sir Henry Cole made no attempt to indicate. The

scholarly editing will make this the standard edition of Peacock's writing for a long time.

## EARLY AMERICAN AUTOGRAPHS

IN the February number of his "Autograph Bulletin," Thomas F. Madigan says:

"To the collector of Americana in autographs no group of names should hold a stronger appeal than the generals of the Continental Army, those staunch patriots, who so often faced death on the battlefield and endured such hardships, privation, and disease in camps. It was their efforts, their daring, frequently their blood that made the Declaration of Independence something more than a mere scrap of paper. There is no reason why their autographs should not be eagerly sought as those of the Signers of the American Magna Charta. Yet it is true that this great galaxy of heroes has not been collected to any large extent as a set. True, some of the names are sought, such as Nathaniel Greene, Israel Putnam, Anthony Wayne, and Lafayette, but there is not the wide demand for the entire group that prevails in the case of the Signers. In that very fact is the collector's opportunity, for, with few exceptions, the autographs of the generals of the Revolutionary War are at present quite plentiful and all, even the rarer names, may be had at a moderate price—until such time as the tide of collecting sets in their direction, when there will be the resultant advance in prices, as with the Presidents and Signers."

## A DICKENS MEMORIAL

N connection with the world-wide campaign for subscriptions which has been launched by the Dickens Fellowship, with the object of establishing a suitable memorial in London to Charles Dickens, it would seem peculiarly appropriate if the building at 48 Doughty Street, which has been suggested as a home for this "Dickens House," can be utilized as planned. For it was here that Dickens lived after his marriage, and it was here that he wrote "Pickwick Papers," "Nicholas Nickleby" and "Oliver Twist." This building has remained practically unaltered since the novelist occupied it. The money to be collected is to be known as the Charles Dickens House Fund, and it is proposed that the memorial shall take the form of a museum, library, and picture gallery in memory of Dickens and open to all who care for the great author regardless of what part of the world they may come.

## DIRECTORY OF COLLECTORS

TWELVE years ago *The Publishers' Weekly* published a list of private collectors in the United States, giving information in regard to the lines or hobbies in which each was interested. The directory, from the first, proved a great help to collectors in securing books that they wanted and to dealers in finding buyers for books that they wished to sell. Since then, at intervals of three years a revision of the list has been published. The data is arranged not only in geographical order, as was the first, but by name in alphabetical order with the classes of books in which they are interested, also under an index of subjects showing what collectors are interested in them. This information is invaluable to the rare book trade and collectors can see at a glance who are collecting on lines similar to their own. The trade has used this list in America

and England to supplement catalogue lists, thus bringing to collectors lists and catalogues without expense or effort on their part. A fifth edition of this directory is to be published this fall. Any reader of this department, wishing to take advantage of this opportunity, is invited to send *The Publishers' Weekly*, 62 West 45th Street, New York, his full name, address, and class of books in which he is collecting to be included in this new edition.

## SALE OF BRITISH COURT BOOKS

TWO parts of the famous library formerly at Britwell Court, the property of S. R. Christie-Miller, will soon be dispersed at Sotheby's in London. On March 23 to 26, inclusive, early English poetry and other literature will be sold. This part comprises 682 lots. On March 30 to April 3, inclusive, 797 lots, mainly early English works on the arts and sciences, will be sold. Both of these parts contain many unique and extremely rare items. The catalogues for these parts have been issued and will be sent to collectors who are interested. When the sale of this great library is completed it will doubtless have won the distinction of being the most valuable library ever dispersed at public sale. This record has been held for more than a decade by the library of Robert Hoe, sold in this city in 1911-12, which brought about \$2,000,000. The great increase in the value of rare books since the Hoe sale will probably enable the Britwell Court library to exceed this figure.

The original manuscript of a wedding song composed by Beethoven on the occasion of the marriage of Giannatanasio del Rie, principal of the school attended by Beethoven's nephew, Carl, was recently discovered.

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