

# The Saturday Review

## of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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### What Do You Want?

COUNT HERMANN KEYSERLING, in the most remarkable book published in English this year, strikes off in a paragraph an image of the siren fascination of America. There never was a country where success on a low plane of culture, but still success, was so easily gained, where so many lived fully and lived intensely in their pursuit of progress. The saint who fails of perfect saintliness, the artist who does not master his craft, the idealist who never gets his theory into practice are not so fully alive, not so happy, as the vigorous American who sets a house, an automobile, a good business, and an education for his children as his objectives, and reaches them by middle age.

"Don't knock, boost," says the slogan, now a little dusty. It is the same idea. To turn up the intellectual nose at the rough and tumble of American life is a gesture just a little absurd in folk who can afford to be supercilious only because their ancestors were willing to rough it in mixed society. The pallid individual, neurotic from too little action, emotionally starved, who looks down upon the vulgar because they live too hard, talk loud, laugh heartily, is an irritating by-product of a civilization that has to be energetic or go under. To live life fully is the first requisite for worthy living on any plane, and therefore a tipsy bootlegger shooting his car at sixty miles an hour across the border, is probably nearer heaven in the philosophic as well as the slang sense, than a thin-blooded clerk drying in a shop corner or a critic of everything that has the demerit of still existing.

Yet a full-blooded civilization, whose richest satisfactions come from success in adventurous trading, is not far removed from barbarism, healthy perhaps, cheerful probably, but still barbarism. It is not our condition, yet, nor does Keyserling expect it, but it is one of several possible curves along which American society may travel. It is an inescapable curve for the easily successful who do not lift up their minds and hearts.

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Pastors recommend religion under various labels for a state of high living on a low plane, teachers, education, psychologists, a better regimen for the pre-school child, statesmen, American idealism without saying just what they mean, radicals, a brand new set of institution, physical culturists, better biceps. We, for our part, affirm that the American soul (call it spirit or consciousness of self if you please) is pitifully small by comparison with American shrewdness or American energy. Of ways of access to that soul there are many, doubtless the best being personal contact with those of greater soul than our own, example having always been more powerful than argument. When the U. S. A. in addition to supplying a post office and a federal building to every American city provides a sage, a saint, or a hero whose job is merely to live there, we shall advance faster on the road to high civilization.

Yet in default of flesh and blood exemplars there are those luminous projections of men's souls—good books. Critical journals are always accused of too much concern for Art. There cannot be too much concern for art, although it may

### Solomon Nash

BY DANIEL HENDERSON

BUTCHER, baker and candy-maker—  
Their shops are thronged, their counters  
jammed;  
But Solomon Nash, the undertaker,  
Is passed by people as though he were damned.  
Solomon Nash, in his empty place,  
Has yet invisible traffickers,  
And serves with quiet, considerate grace  
His impalpable customers,  
Seeking with rosewood and silver handles  
To lend a dignity to doom;  
Hovering where the sentry candles  
Gild with sanctity the gloom.

What though now in the gay parade  
With eyes avoiding men hurry past  
At all the counters of life to trade:  
He knows they will come to him at last.

Solomon Nash will nurse no grudge  
That he is shunned by the living hosts  
Because Lord Death has made him drudge:  
They will know his gentleness, when they are  
ghosts!

### Uncrowned King of Sussex

BY CAMERON ROGERS

WHEN Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the uncrowned King of Sussex, died in his eighty-third year on November 9, 1922, there were but few of that vivid fellowship of his youth and manhood to observe upon it or to note the unfilled niche among the last of the great Victorians. Blunt who had shocked these many times and had chidden them thunderously from afar off for their sinewed faith in imperialism and their heavy footed stumbling among people who abhorred them; prophesying evil for England in the East and evil for England in Ireland; Blunt, the mad prophet of an enfranchised Islam and the ægis of Arabi, had after all outlived them as he had outthated and outsung them. They could never quite understand him. Perhaps in their holloing in the spoor marks of Cromer and Kitchener they never wished to, feeling that he was in some inexcusable way "a wrong un" though the kinsman of noblemen and himself one of the greatest gentlemen in England. In a manner incredibly magnificent he had betrayed his caste, wronged the salt of his own great Southern holdings, the coverts of Crabbet, and the Jacobean suzerainty of Newbuildings. He left England to ride abroad in the Saharan open upon a steel-thewed barb as arrogant as himself, to ride in a burnous as white as the sunlight, the handsomest face in Europe outthrust, urgent as a hawk's, to perceive the tyrannies and the follies of his countrymen in the land of his adoption.

To leave Sussex for a vast pagan household in the Sahara, pitched in the very shadow of the tomb of a Muslim Saint! Sheikh El Obeyd and Newbuildings! Monstrous. The man was a comedian. And yet El Sheikh El Obeyd became suddenly a noise in the land and in the less gaol of Khartoum another protestant his voice, though his own beat quite upon the ear-drums of a Grand Old Man, certain of Her Majesty's service who had with the emirs at Abu Klea and El Teb called in. evil levity Gordon's Old Murderer.

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Blunt at Sheikh El Obeyd befriended Arabi though he might not avert the punishment that crushed his crusade with the guns of Tel-el-Kebir. His convictions became a hail of little shafts that from the quivers of bookbindings made him a malison in the eyes of right-thinking England. And then he swept into England and shortly therefrom into Ireland where he opposed England with such glittering crescendoes that he passed into Kilmainham gaol for a few months, as delighted as a child.

Ah, Blunt! Incurable case. And yet from his birth in 1840 to 1869 when the diplomacy of his country was bereaved of his services, he had been all that a landed gentleman of heritage and presence should be. Something in the eyes of his equally endowed contemporaries, had then gone wrong. But what? Poet, diplomat, sculptor, author, sportsman, traveller, and a lover of many conquests, his were qualities sufficient, one might think, to guarantee sound British political views. But, alas, not so. Imperialism became

### This Week

"This Old Man." Reviewed by  
*William McFee.*

"The Trap." Reviewed by *Hamish Miles.*

"Wanderings." Reviewed by *H. W. Boynton.*

"The Northeast Corner." Reviewed  
by *Louis Untermeyer.*

"Tibet Past and Present." Reviewed  
by *Kenneth Saunders.*

"Bertram Goodhue." Reviewed by  
*A. T. North.*

### Next Week, or Later

"The Venetian Glass Nephew." Re-  
viewed by *Carl Van Vechten.*

"Professor's House." Reviewed by  
*Henry Seidel Canby.*

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be narrowly and even offensively expressed, but even the unæsthetic should demand better books because it is not merely advisable, it is imperative, that the taste in reading of a rich and successful nation should lift, not remain static or decline. Souls' dimensions are involved.

Taste is not improved by command. "Read better books" makes a good slogan, but what *are* better books, and what *is* a better book for you—a true romance, a novel of the inner life, this

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in his mind a murrain laid upon him personally, a sickness to be delivered from and from which to deliver others. And he strove for this deliverance while his peers snorted with annoyance and fumed with a perfectly justifiable irritation.

And of course in the meantime he had married the granddaughter of Lord Byron and there is no doubt he found reserves in the blood and bone of the Noels.

What a honeymoon and what a marriage. On foot, on horses, this vibrant couple made of the whole Orient their playground and of Africa their especial village green. Arabic was as their own language to them and in them as in that other dark genius, Sir Richard Burton, the Bedawi strain seemed stronger than the Saxon.

Curiously enough Blunt had but little profit or pleasure from the evening when he and Sir Richard came into each other's company. Sir Richard's fault, no doubt, since he cast those hypnotic eyes so dreadfully upon Wilfrid that the latter raised a navy revolver against him and threatened to pistol him if he did not at once desist. Yet in one way the two would not have made an ill-assorted couple.

Blunt labored his whole life long with a changing mind upon matters spiritual. He had come under the influence of Newman who, he would say, had wrought a miracle upon him. He had been more than once upon the point of a fervent and orthodox Catholicism, and then always he waited, wrestled anew with himself, and lived on beyond the extended handgrip of the church. Islam beckoned and to his dear friend the Grand Mufti, he more than once nearly made the profession of faith. He did not. Still he wrestled. One year of barren combat he determined to make an end of doubt and set out upon a journey of forty days to interview the chieftain temporal and spiritual of the Senussi whose power went forth from Jerabub near Tripoli. His guide was of the Senussi, and his pilgrimage lay among their fellowship, yet the convert-to-be was set upon and beaten, robbed and sorely injured, more, however, in his faith than in his body. So doubts returned again fourfold and he wrestled and still wrestled.

In moments between this spiritual rough and tumbling, preaching, riding, and making love, he wrote. He wrote poetry that will live as long as anthologists exist to anthologize, such poetry as the first of that couple of superb sonnets:

O world, in very truth thou art too young;  
When wilt thou learn to wear the garb of age?  
World, with thy covering of yellow flowers,  
Hast thou forgot what generations sprung  
Out of thy loins and loved thee and are gone?  
Hast thou no place in all their heritage  
Where thou dost only weep, that I may come  
Nor fear the mockery of thy yellow flowers?  
O world, in very truth thou art too young,  
The heroic wealth of passionate emprise  
Built thee fair cities for thy naked plains.  
How hast thou set thy summer growth among  
The broken stones which were their palaces!  
Hast thou forgot the darkness where he lies  
Who made thee beautiful, or have thy bees  
Found out his grave to build their honeycombs?

And certainly his prose will live as long as Ireland or the British occupation of Egypt are of interest to the world. But of the two it is his verse that is the more enduring. There had come quite early the Sonnets of Proteus of which Oscar Wilde in a review of "In Vinculis," sterner ones written a decade or so later from Kilmainham Gaol, remarked with a pleasant smugness that not a few were shameful. Oh, the usage the "nineties" gave that word! In any case they were love sonnets for a multitude of loves inspired Wilfrid. Esther and Manon and Juliet and a many more. There is for instance for those who care to look for it, that translucent acrostic subtly entitled "A Cuckoo Song" to a young noblewoman who could not well have been more beautiful than her name.

Not all were in this vein, however. There is "The Wind and The Whirlwind" which blew into England out of Egypt clamant with an indignant warning and whose ending has proved not unprophectic:

Therefore I do not grieve. Oh hear me, Egypt!  
Even in death thou art not wholly dead. And hear me, England! Nay. Thou needs must hear me. I had a thing to say. And it is said.

It was even nobly said but it left nevertheless the nerves of the future Lord Cromer astonishingly unruffled. That this was so must have been a keen disappointment to Blunt for he abominated Baring. In an elder day he would have called him out and run him through with a sense of great service to mankind, but custom in the closing decades of the nineteenth century hampered this solution. Invective was the only weapon in genteel usage and though invective Blunt could use as a rapier, sabre, or bludgeon with equal dexterity, yet the old fox remained unperturbed. In Blunt's journals we read of the eventual kill, however, and Wilfrid triumphant with the mask at his saddle-bow.

As the torrential course of his life bore him through the fifties he began to settle slowly back into the comely embrace of his Sussex properties and El Sheikh became more and more the Squire. There was the Arab stud of Lady Anne and the annual sales at Crabbet where were assembled year after year men, women, and horses of the best blood in England. His contemporaries and his peers among the old landed gentry entertained a profound admiration for Blunt the host and great gentleman. They confounded this aspect not at all with the political one and though Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary of Ireland in 1887, refused Wilfrid permission to have his fur great-coat in Kilmainham Gaol, he was observed to borrow it himself one nipping afternoon at Crabbet a short while later as he set out to view the stud. "May I just take this coat, Wilfrid?" How pleasant a request for Blunt to grant.

Indeed many of them chose entirely to disregard what they considered a lamentable and incurable mania in a man whose heritage and ancestry was as illustrious and as rooted in the island tradition as those of the Percys themselves. Blunt's kinsman, for instance, the beautiful and brilliant George Wyndham, preserved during the whole of his lifetime great love and respect for Wilfrid, and when he was apprehended in the midst of astonishing rhetoric on the properties of that sinister nobleman, the last Earl of Clanricarde, he of the balas ruby bracelets and brutalized tenantry, and taken thence to gaol, Wyndham as who should say, poor lad, another seizure, allowed none of his affection to expire.

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In those as in later days there was brave company at Crabbet and great dinners where Lady Anne at one end of the long long table, when she spoke to the guest upon her right or left, would in a gesture born of an enforced habit, crane to observe if her words were approved by the squire though no spoken syllables could carry a quarter of this distance to his ears.

But the granddaughter of Lord Byron of Rochdale died long before her storm riding husband. The twentieth century found Wilfrid sadly depressed with apparently but one pleasure in life, the harrying of Cromer, grown now of an apoplectic habit and pictured by Sargent "like a profiteer on one of his own packing cases."

George Wyndham the beloved died in his prime and men of Wilfrid's own and older generation were missed daily from the august windows of Brook's or Buck's or White's, to be recalled only by tablets in the Abbey and the succession of their estates.

The war moved him, but not greatly. He still abominated imperialism though the thunder of his denunciations had fled, spent, into skies dead years before.

And then there occurred the tragedy of Lady Anne's Arab stud, the great Crabbet stud, famous for two generations. His daughter, once the wife of the Honorable Neville Lytton and now the Baroness Wentworth, removed the stud by legal processes from his to her possession. A redoubtable lady by all accounts. Not filial perhaps but with the wills of Blunt and Byron so welded together within her character that the possessor of only one of them, handicapped by age and the utter lack of legal rights, could hardly hope to rout her. And so passed the jewel of his later days.

One morning in August, 1920 I drove from Greatham in company with Wilfrid and Alice Meynell to Newbuildings. We found Blunt like a high and ancient tower and clad in a flowing desert garment, superintending the inspection of

a comely mare while the nephew of Chinese Gordon felt the slender forelegs and satin quarters. We passed into the Jacobean beauty of Newbuildings, where the newelled staircase and the Morris tapestry, the Chippendale and the Jacobean furniture and the pictures of his beloved horses, the Godolphin Arab, the Spotted Polish stallion, the Darnley Arab, and his own superb Mesaud wrought an atmosphere that lapped one about like tangible stuffs, glowing and magical. We drank a very ancient white Burgundy and watched a pheasant single-foot through a little place apart where Francis Thomson had lived his last few pitiful days.

There was no tumult here of riven Egypt and tossing Ireland. Peace was inhaled and exhaled like a satisfying smoke. He was in his eighty-first year and the men he had befriended or hated, protected or attacked, were all dead. Arabi was dead and Cromer, who had devised his ruin, and Kitchener who had perpetrated the outrage of Omdurman. All dead and the issues of their labors fast following them. In Newbuildings there was an extraordinary peace, a thing intimately connected with cadent sunlight and repose after hard work. He died unshriven by the church beyond whose walls he had spent a lifetime making up his mind to turn for the solution of all things to Rome. He desired no priest, no masses. He was buried in his own soil in the most beautiful woodland in the world, and the hares lollop by and the pheasants cucker the seasons through above his unregarding head. It is conceivable that the uncrowned king of Sussex whose abilities were so many and so varied that they jostled each other in their rush for expression deserves to share with Antony the spoken epitaph

There is nothing left remarkable  
Under the visiting moon.

## In Quiet Mood

THIS OLD MAN. By GERTRUDE BONE. With drawings by Muirhead Bone. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1925.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MCFEE

HERE is a book, of genuine beauty and excellence, for the quiet hour. It is a work upon which everyone concerned, author, artist, publisher, printer, papermaker, and binder, can be whole-heartedly congratulated. It would bring an expression of approval even from those stern and implacable craftsmen, the binders of fine books.

The story itself is a sure and capable study of English country folk. It is full of entrancing pictures of their life, the seasons, the fecund earth under their feet, of which they are indissolubly a part, and the cloud-flecked skies above them, towards which their eyes turn with practical candor for signs of changing weather. It is a study essentially of a static civilization. The people trudge on foot, or ride a mile or two in a cart, or prepare with portentous solemnity for a journey to London by train. They do not move, in a general way, much more than Hardy's Wessex folk. They are sharply contrasted with the country folk of New England, with their electric light and power plants in their cellars, their telephones and motor cars and nationally advertised provender. We are reminded, in reading "This Old Man", that we are essentially modified by the means of communication we adopt. It is for us to decide whether the spirit of the countryside, as depicted in a book like this, is worth preserving and whether it can be preserved, in our era of swift travel.

The difficulty confronting the reviewer, in commending Mrs. Bone's book to American readers, is to account for its lack of problems. It propounds nothing. There is neither adultery nor any other of the complications of sex which seem indispensable to many modern folk to stimulate their literary digestive tracts. The characters have never heard of glands, Freud, or repressed desires. They explain perhaps why it is that England has less crime than many single cities and States in America.

But there is a pathos in the figure of old John Dutton, bereft of his Mary, which will compensate many for the lack of the more conven-