

adequate on the importance, quality, and direction of recent Anglo-Irish literature. To think of Irish life, political, religious or social, as static and unified may appeal to some minds, but so many strands, Gaelic, Protestant, English, Catholic, have been interwoven in the national life and tradition that the Irish character remains still delightfully expressive, varied, and individual, and its future interestingly uncertain. This, many think, is the great creation of Ireland, more valuable than mere economic wealth or political solidarity, and refreshing by contrast with the uniformity of great modern states. To believe in this is to believe in tolerance, and hence views so untraditional and strongly expressed as Judge O'Connor's, even if often unwelcome to Irish Nationalists and to Irish Protestants, too, must be welcomed and examined.

Negro Folk-Lore

NEGRO WORKADAY SONGS. By HOWARD W. ODUM and GUY B. JOHNSON. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 1926. \$3.

FOLK BELIEFS OF THE SOUTHERN NEGRO. By NEWBELL NILES PUCKETT. The same. \$5.

Reviewed by JOHN HARRINGTON COX

Author of "Folk Songs of the South"

ONE of the most striking things in modern scholarship is the way it is turning the light upon the Negro and his folk-lore. To the literary man and the sociologist this vast field has a strange fascination. Only one who has endeavored to work in this subject can appreciate its illusiveness. Its profundity and the many angles from which it may be attacked are drawing to it some of the best equipped investigators of the day. To the long list of books and articles on the Negro and his songs at least three outstanding volumes were added last year, namely, "On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs," by Dorothy Scarborough; "The Book of American Spirituals," by James Weldon Johnson, and "The Negro and His Songs," by Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson. No doubt this alluring and almost illimitable field is to be the happy hunting ground of the sociologist and folk-lorist for some time to come.

"Negro Workaday Songs" is a most admirable presentation of the subject. Although primarily a study in sociology, it is scarcely less interesting as a literary production. All the songs were taken directly from Negro singers and the selection of the specimens presented was evidently made with an eye to literary appreciation. The discussions are exceptionally readable. One senses the subtle humor and the weariness of the long road in

I done walk till,
Lawd, I done walk till
Feet's gone to rollin',
Jes' lak a wheel,
Lawd, jes' lak a wheel.

The book rises to its climax in the chapter, "John Henry: Epic of the Negro Workman." The authors think that John Henry, "mos' fore-handed steel drivin' man in the world," was "probably a mythical character." Nine major variants of the song and four minor ones are given as typical of the great hero of "hundreds of thousands of black toilers."

The prose epic of John Henry related in the volume is certainly not less interesting than the songs about him and is no mean rival to the tale of Paul Bunyan himself, as the following bit will testify:

One day John Henry lef' rock quarry on way to camp an' had to go through woods an' fiel'. Well, he met big black bear an' didn't do nothin' but shoot 'im wid his bow an' arrer, an' arrer went clean through bear an' stuck in big tree on other side. So John Henry pull arrer out of tree an' pull so hard he falls back 'gainst 'nother tree which is full of flitterjacks, an' first tree is full o' honey, an' in pullin' arrer out o' one he shaken down honey, an' in fallin' 'gainst other he shaken down flitterjacks. Well, John Henry set there an' et honey an' flitterjacks an' set there an' et honey an' flitterjacks, an' after while when he went to git up to go, button pop off'n his pants an' kill a rabbit mo' 'n hundred ya'ds on other side o' de tree. An' so up jumped brown baked pig wid sack o' biscuits on his back, an' John Henry et him too.

Fourteen typical Negro tunes given in the book

and an illuminating chapter on Phono-Photographic Records, presenting eleven graphs with explanations, greatly enhance its value. An excellent bibliography and an adequate index complete the volume.



"Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro" belongs to the type that first appears as a doctor's dissertation and later eventuates into a book. Worked out under the auspices of Yale University it bears the marks of careful scholarship that one expects to see in a doctor's thesis from that institution. All the apparatus so dear to the scholar's heart is to be found here: the detailed table of contents giving a bird's-eye-view of each chapter; the profusion of footnotes; seventeen pages of references cited; an alphabetical list of four hundred and seven informants with their addresses and the names of the institutions to which many of them belong; and forty pages of index. These help make it possible to find anything in the volume with a minimum of time and effort. The student is impressed with the thoroughness and accuracy of the treatment, with no sense of pedantry, while the easy style and the all-pervasive human interest should make it a fascinating book for the general reader.

In the chapter on "Practical and Emotional Background" the author traces the "mental heirlooms" of the black race of the Old South in part back to the dark continent whence it came, but also discovers that

choice items of folk-lore were handed down from the white master to the better class of slaves with whom he had more friendly contact. These European beliefs were later forgotten by the white man and relegated by the more advanced Negro to the garret of mental life; but in the more illiterate Negro sections, and especially in the rural sections—the very woodshed of Negro life—may be found many fragments of European thought. Mutilated and half-forgotten, smeared with the veneer of culture, and hammered together with items of "book-larnin," health-propaganda, Scripture, and what-not, this miscellany nevertheless shows the Negro to be, at least in part, the custodian of former beliefs of the white.

The author aptly observes that this European lore had a greater chance of perpetuation than the purely African lore. The latter would be likely to die out "since its devotees in America were too few in number and too scattered to provide the constant repetition necessary for remembrance."

Mr. Puckett finds that of the broad African traits, laziness, humor, and sexuality are most prominent. Of the first he observes that "the slavery-time environment of the Negro was not calculated to leave a traditional background making for habits of energy and foresight." He sees in the Negro's lively sense of humor a "survival-value in that it prevents pining away under adversity" and cites as a "splendid illustration of balsamic utility" the following:

White folks lib in a fine brick house,
Lawd, de yalluh gal do's de same;
De ole nigger lib in Columbus jail,
But hit's a brick house jes' de same.

A well-regulated sex life he judges to be in part a "result of cultural background" and the sexual indulgences of the Negro "may conceivably be a racial characteristic developed by natural selection in West Africa as a result of the frightful mortality."

Leaving to the philologist a first-hand perusal of the discussion of True Linguistic survivals, embracing such terms as voodoo (or hoodoo), goober, pickaninny, Gullah, wangateur, hully-gully, and tote, the reviewer is tempted to cite for the delectation of the general reader a few such specimens of mutilated English as the "Christian and Deviled Egg Society" (Christian Endeavor and Aid Society); "Dem curious Cadillacs (Catholics) what woan' eat no meat on Friday;" "De nineteen wile in his han'" (the anointing oil in his hand).

A marked bit of the Negro's practical and emotional background is his passion for joining lodges and societies. His grandiloquent speech is as useful in telling something about himself as it is in expressing his ideas. Consider the following from the standpoint of wishing to be impressive:

Underneath de ole foundations whar imputations rivals no gittin' along.

When Moses had grew to a manhood
To a gypsum once he had slun.

The telling of animal tales is almost a passion with the African Negro, a passion that survives in

his Southern descendants. These stories had a far deeper purpose than merely furnishing entertainment. "Almost always the weaker animal by his superior wit wins out in the contest with more ferocious animals of superior strength. In a symbolic way this may have been originally a form of prayer or incantation whereby protection against these powerful denizens of the jungle was secured." A study of these pages furnishes a background for a larger understanding of "Uncle Remus." From a discussion of the origin and the world-wide parallels of the famous "Tar-Baby Story," the investigator leads on through erroneous nature-beliefs (such as that the hoop-snake can stand on the tip of its tail and whistle like a man, and that frogs eat buckshot and coals of fire), riddles, proverbs, games, African music, slave dancing, holy dances, and "jump-up-songs." We read that a Negro prayer is really a spontaneous song and that sorrow is expressed in the same fashion.

In the exposition of the practical and emotional background of the Negro, the chapter pushes on through Negro song structure, religious songs, ragtime and jazz, education by song, rhythmic lore, funeral fun, *et al*, until apparently every conceivable phase of the subject is exhausted.



Eighty-eight pages are given over to burial customs, ghosts, and witches, in which the reader is edified and entertained by such topics as stygian signposts, graveyard omen, dead detectives, ghost dodging, Negro haunts, cadaverous avengers, vampires, ghouls, spookey humor, and how to see ghosts, until one wonders along with the author as to whether the Negro has not a reality inherent in his make-up that the white man lacks.

The origin of the Voodoo Cult, its savage rites and outgrowths in various conjurations claims one-fourth of the volume. In addition to unquestionable testimony, the author writes with the certitude of personal observations. This is no doubt the most deep-seated and most terrifying of the beliefs that the Negro brought with him from Africa.

One phase of the Voodoo Cult is the worship of the python and thousands of these serpent worshipping tribes were sold as slaves into the Western world. Its chief priests were a king and a queen, into whose bodies the spirit of the python entered and spoke through them in a strange voice. In New Orleans "Li Grand Zombi" was the mysterious power that guarded and overshadowed the faithful *voodoo*. Through page after page of these nauseating and terrifying rites, the vivid portrayal holds the reader enrapt. The account of Marie Laveau (the last of the Voodoo queens), diabolical festivals, initiations, modern voodoo dances, the African witch doctor, the Southern hoodoo doctor, trick bags, conjure balls, images, reptiles in the body, hoodooing for science, and a score of other topics testify to the wide ramification of this cult and its fascinating interest.

Two chapters deal with positive and negative control signs, cures, and taboos. Prophetic signs and omens furnish material for another chapter, and the book closes with a discussion of Christianity and Superstition, a brief but vivid and powerful picture of the mingling of superstition and religion in the Negro soul.

"Folk-Beliefs of the Southern Negro" is an indispensable book to any one who hereafter shall plow in this field.

To ensure perfect collaboration between author and artist, G. K. Chesterton has done all the illustrations for Hilaire Belloc's new humorous novel, "The Emerald," in Mr. Belloc's presence.

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Urban or Bucolic?

THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY. By CHARLES DOWNING LAY. New York: Duffield & Co. 1926. \$1.00.

A BUCOLIC ATTITUDE. By WALTER PRICHARD EATON. The same.

Reviewed by H. W. BOYNTON

THIS is an odd pair of booklets, if it can be called a pair. The author of the first is a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and ardently exalts the place where landscape is not or nearly not. The author of the second is (or is best known as) a dramatic critic, and writes here like a country gentleman. Mr. Eaton has the advantages of being a professional writer, and of appearing in rebuttal. Mr. Lay wrote his book in praise of the city and then the publishers asked Mr. Eaton to speak for the country, with the Lay argument directly in mind.

Mr. Lay writes awkwardly, as an advocate piling up points rather than as a lover of the city discoursing on the charms of his mistress. He also writes intemperately. He commits the cardinal error of building his praise of one thing on dispraise of another. On the whole, our impression is that he isn't quite comfortable in his own mind about the status of the city as against the country. He protests too much, strains too many points in favor of his client. Why should his liking for New York make him so short with people who prefer living elsewhere? The truth is, his book is primarily a defense of the city and, but for a perfunctory word or two at the outset, he will say nothing good of the country.

People, he begins, object to the city because it is crowded; but this is the great virtue of a city. Crowds mean coöperation and specialized service. Your chores are all done for you in the city. Your heat, your light, your snow-shoveling are all lumped into the rent. Moreover, "there are within a thousand feet of 42nd Street and Broadway, New York, 56,000 seats in theatres and in the whole city 96,000 seats." In such dreary and discouraging data, Mr. Lay's spirit rejoices; and he will not admit that there are any benefits to make up for them outside of city limits. "Think" (he breathes with a sort of reverent wonder), "think, for instance, what a yell from a city window will bring. First a policeman, then firemen, and an ambulance with its doctor and nurse. What use to yell in the country?" Well, one use is that you can yell in the country without fetching any of those functionaries. The welkin is yours, one of your luxuries, and you ask no man's permission to make it ring. But this is wasting yells, from Mr. Lay's point of view.

The short of it is, that upon the sound premise that city people need not apologize for liking to live in the city, he builds a heavy and lopsided argument against the country. In his use, as Mr. Eaton is quick to remark, the terms city and country have little meaning. When he says city, he means one city, New York; and when he says country he means something quite below the average of life as now lived, outside of New York City, by really quite a few millions of contented citizens.

Mr. Eaton's book was occasioned by Mr. Lay's; but as he admits in his "Foreword," is less controversial than autobiographical. It is a very pretty piece of familiar writing, in which the writer applies the touchstone of his personal experience to the case in point. After a good many years of life in the city—Mr. Lay's City—years which brought him to the verge of a nervous breakdown, Mr. Eaton took a house in Stockbridge, and began to enjoy life. Later he bought a mountainside farm in the Berkshires, and busied himself making over an old house to his taste. The bulk of this book is a description of his makings and doings in this country setting, almost as circumstantial as that with which Mr. Hergesheimer has recently edified his public.

As for the matter of city vs. country, Mr. Eaton does not treat it as ground for heated argument. He gently suggests three or four tolerably patent facts. The first is that what is true of New York is not true of American cities in general: "I could take a New Yorker to twenty cities where he would be almost as completely miserable as he would be living up here where I live, in the Berkshire Hills." Another is that you get vastly more space and comfort for your money, indoors and out, in the country than in the city. And another is the country-dweller is as free to get the city when he wants it, as the city-dweller is to get the country—a fact which Mr. Lay disingenuously suppresses. Finally

he touches on that mysterious call or pull of the land, that passion for breathing-space and elbow-room which still keeps so many millions (rather against Mr. Lay's advice) in the country: "I know that when one of them gives up his ancestral home for an Upper West Side flat, gives up the plow handles for the bank clerk's pen, gives up the sight of our mountain for the movies, gives up the freedom of the country for the cramped restlessness of the city, he is giving up something fine and precious. What he gets in return may quite compensate him. That, after all, is a personal matter."

A Strayed Cavalier

IS 5. By E. E. CUMMINGS. New York: Boni and Liveright. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GLENN HUGHES

University of Washington

THE volume under consideration is not a mathematical treatise; it is a series of experiments in typography. The author has very generously used up a number of his lyric poems in the process, and if he is not prosecuted by the anti-vivisectionists it will merely show that the feelings of a poem are not held in the same reverence as those of a kitten.

Is it necessary to state that Mr. Cummings is one of the most brilliant young American poets? Two previous collections of his poems (not to mention the recent *Dial Award*) are proof enough of his unusual skill in the matter of putting words together to create a sensation. His sophisticated wit ranks him with T. S. Eliot, his audacity, with Ezra Pound. One might go on like this for some time, comparing him with those to whom he is obviously indebted, but it will perhaps be sufficient to mention Gertrude Stein, the world's most famous stutterer, and the Cavalier Poets, whose subtle blending of erudition with frivolity might easily win for them the title of "the Eliots and Cummingses of the seventeenth century."

It must have been quite apparent to many readers that in the best of his early lyrics Mr. Cummings was reviving, and with indisputable success, the mannerisms of Marvell, Suckling, Herrick, and Carew. He even intensified their preciousness. "And your quaint honor turn to dust" sounds like Cummings, but actually is Marvell. "The liquefaction of her clothes" is a familiar line from Herrick, but how Mr. Cummings would like to have written it! And he almost could have, for he is clever. In "Puella Mea," his most pretentious *poème d'amour*, he set down line after line of exquisite gallantry. He pressed his adjectives too hard, but still he created a charming poem. Its movement was not too stiffly metrical, its punctuation only slightly perverse. And several of the sonnets in the same volume achieved nearly as fine an effect. But the mood which inspired them has now vanished. Herrick has been returned to the shelf, and courtliness cast aside as an outworn cloak.

It is not strange that a young man should exhibit a passion for seventeenth century poetry, nor that he should try in his modest way to improve upon it. It is not even strange that a clever young man should exploit his cleverness by means of mechanical trickery. But it is strange, not to say disconcerting, that a clever young man should grow into his tricks rather than out of them. Yet that is just what Mr. Cummings has done. In his new book he has descended to the very depths of type-arrangement. He has done his level best to give a flat poem point by twisting it into a puzzle. Followers of W. Somerset Maugham's fiction will recall the asinine Mrs. Albert Forrester, who "was able to get every ounce of humor out of the semicolon." What a trivial and uninspired person she seems beside Mr. Cummings!

As I have already indicated, one could forgive the author of these poems his exasperating humor of punctuation did he offer as reward any richness of thought or feeling. But in "is 5" the form too often is an empty shell. There are in the collection a few lyrics with the biting quality of Sandburg's realistic sketches, and there are others (dealing with the banalities of American life) that George Jean Nathan might have written in his sleep after dining on rarebit and moonshine at a Negro cabaret. Again, we are given the portraits of "Five Americans." All five of them are prostitutes. (This particular humorous device is so out-moded that one is embarrassed at meeting it again.) Finally we are presented with disjointed

monologues in New Yorkese. The manner of Milt Gross for the manner of Herrick—that is the metamorphosis of Mr. Cummings.

I know artists are always saying that a good painting looks as well upside down as any other way. And it may be true. The question now arises: does the same principle apply to a poem? But it is not necessary to answer the question; if a poem is good, people will gladly stand on their heads to read it. It is conceivable, if not probable, that the favorite poetic form of the future will be a sonnet arranged as a cross-word puzzle. If there were no other way of getting at Shakespeare's sonnets than by solving a cross-word puzzle sequence, I am sure the puzzles would be solved and the sonnets enjoyed. But what about Mr. Cummings? Can his poems surmount such obstacles? Well, perhaps if they cannot survive as poems they can survive as puzzles.

No, the book is not a mathematical treatise, yet it has an equation for a title. The author tells us explicitly in his introduction that he is not trying to be original, that he is but demonstrating once again the "purely irresistible truth" that two times two is five. Thus the subtlety of the title lies not in its significance but in its abbreviated form. The danger in such an abbreviation should be apparent to the author: in these days of prodigious child poets it is misleading for the jacket of a book to carry the legend, "E. E. Cummings is 5." I am sure he is older than that.

Anguish and Rebellion

THE LEPER SHIP. By ISADORE LHEVINNE. New York: The Halcyon Books. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

THE three short stories in this volume are all grim, powerful, and as unpleasant as life. The title story deals with an ill-fated refugee ship from Vladivostok, a mysterious nameless wreck of a ship which appears from no one knows where, takes on its cargo of human derelicts, and sails away for Shanghai. Amid the defeated humanity on board there is one radiant figure, a young and beautiful girl; she is found to have contracted leprosy and is murdered; gradually the ship becomes a shambles of disease, terror, and crime. Badly captained, it wanders from its path to Manila, where it is refused entrance, thence back to Hongkong with the same result; finally it starts wearily for San Francisco. But long ere this the leper ship has entered a timeless realm of horror; the seas which it sails are those of the Flying Dutchman and the Ancient Mariner; it has become a floating segment of Hell where the voyagers, isolated from past and future, suffer a purposeless eternal punishment.

The same sense of irretrievable doom dominates "The Visitor" which narrates the vain attempt of a talented Russian Jew to escape his racial heritage. Having come to America, supplied himself with a convenient Spanish ancestry, and obtained a professorship in an American college, he has broken all external ties with his past only to have it surge up within him and clutch him by the throat at the touch of a letter of denunciation from his dying father. Strange irrational forces, rooted in his organism, overthrow the fine intellect and hurry him into madness.

Slightly less despairing but also less powerful is "The Lost Youth." One is tempted to suspect from the careless printing of the whole volume that the article crept into this title by mistake; at any rate, the story deals with the tragi-comic theme of all lost youth, not with the trivial question, "where is my wandering boy tonight?" The tragi-comedy is that of a middle-aged high school teacher in New York City who falls in love with one of his pupils, a flapper from the Jewish East Side. The pitiful capers of second adolescence are revealed mercilessly but the author is too good a psychologist to attribute them entirely to a physical basis. The desire of the tired bachelor for a home and domestic responsibilities underlies and outlives the sexual infatuation and finds some solace at the end in caring for the family of the Jewess while she herself journeys onward and downward.

Mr. Lhevinne is at his best in the mood of defiance that governs most of his work. "The Leper Ship" and "The Visitor" are cries of unyielding anguish. The style writhes and quivers with scorn, hatred, unavailing rebellion. Realistic so far as frequently to pass into the disgusting, his