

Grandparents' New York

THE LAST FIFTY YEARS IN NEW YORK.

By HENRY COLLINS BROWN. New York: Valentine's Manual, Inc. 1926. \$5.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

CHANGE is so rapid in the metropolis that an air of antiquity already hangs over the New York of the 'seventies and 'eighties. These decades seem as distant from us today as the year 1800 seemed to the people of the Tweed era. The period when "French flats" were just becoming popular; when the streets opposite Central Park were covered with shanties and browsing goats; when men gasped to read that Ned Stokes had shot down Jim Fisk in the Grand Central Hotel in a quarrel over Josie Mansfield; the years when uncle soaked his hair with bear's grease, aunt covered her chairs with antimacassars, and Cousin Kate slaughtered the young men with her chignon and Grecian bend; the time of the mustache cup, the little German band, and the swift trotters on Jerome Parkway—all this has become quaintly picturesque. Mr. Brown, whose revival of Valentine's Manual now fills ten volumes, has doubtless been struck by the fact that well-illustrated essays on New York of the brown-stone-front age are more popular than articles upon eighteenth century New York. In this latest and most attractive addition to his series, he deals with the years 1870-1890. To justify his title he should add a second volume describing New York life from 1890 to today.

New York in the seventies had a million people; it had Brooklyn Bridge under way, and the elevated railways, with little steam locomotives, slowly lengthening northward; it was losing one set of millionaires—A. T. Stewart, Commodore Vanderbilt, William B. Astor—and acquiring another and larger set. The Irish, very generally disliked and looked down upon, remained the chief immigrant group, and the Orange riots between their Catholic and Protestant factions were annual events. In its public arrangements and social life it was still a good deal of an overgrown town. Sleighs were seen everywhere in snowy weather, and there was a great toboggan slide at 110th Street. People had back yards, there were lawns on Fifth Avenue and the grassy, well shaded hills back of Harlem furnished a pleasant afternoon's drive. It was customary for substantial merchants and professional men to lock the office at noon and stroll home for dinner. Everybody worked hard, the ten hour day being usual in stores and offices, and the summer vacation a novelty at which elderly employers sniffed. But few people as yet played hard. Archery furnished a gentle sport, and tennis, for years practised on the old hour-glass courts, vied with croquet as an amusement.



Mr. Brown dwells almost exclusively upon the more attractive surface aspects of the city's life. He does not take us into the slums, which were then of peculiarly horrifying character; he does not mention the appalling epidemics of typhus, smallpox, scarlet fever, and typhoid which regularly swept the town. He says nothing of the painful lack of decent trunk sewers at the beginning of this period, nor the stench of the downtown slaughterhouses. But his somewhat structureless book is packed full of material, treated with engaging lightness. Here may be found a full account of the old Broadway stages, which started and stopped "by means of a leather strap attached to the driver's leg, which served notice of a passenger's intention to alight." He recalls the "soap artist," whose florid designs on bar mirrors for Christmas and Fourth of July were considered by many equal to Michelangelo; the substantial free lunch of the great hotels; the oyster houses, still unworried by rotisseries or spaghetteries; the "hot corn" vendor; the Eden Musee. Full justice is done the old stock companies of Wallack and Daly, and the naughty attractions of the "Black Crook." He does not forget such crazes as that for lawn statuary, nor the touching belief that sunbaths under blue glass cured almost everything. We are introduced, with a wealth of illustrations, to the early Coney Island, where the hot dog was unknown and everybody ate clam chowder; to the target companies who shot in Lion Park, and came home half shot; to the singing waiter in the larger saloons, and the sentimental songs, called "weepers," which he "pulled;" and to the oldtime fishing boats down the bay.

Some few omissions, other than those relating to the darker side of New York in that Age of Inno-

cence, may be noted. Nothing is said of the concert saloon, and the remarkable vogue which it long enjoyed; something less than justice is done the magnificent old German beer-gardens; and we miss the luridly entertaining pages that might have been written upon the gambling dens of the 'seventies. Has all memory perished of 33, the great game in which Ben Wood, at a single sitting, lost \$120,000 to John Morrissey? And surely something more might have been said of the great Morrissey himself, a pugilist and gambling-hall proprietor who nobly represented Manhattan in Congress. But on the whole Mr. Brown's book may be called comprehensive. Nearly all the notables of the period, from Henry Bergh with his much-needed defence of overburdened street-car horses to John Kelly, the satrap of Tammany, are here. The illustrations drawn from a wide variety of sources, are felicitously chosen and distributed. Every lover of old-time New York will hope for further volumes from Mr. Brown's pen.

The Peasants

THE TIME OF MAN. By ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS. New York: The Viking Press. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

THOUGH doubtless no imitation was involved, Miss Elizabeth Madox Roberts has here done for the small farmers of Kentucky what Ladislas Reymont did for the peasants of his native Poland. The scale, to be sure, is smaller, and Miss Roberts has, besides, chosen to center her material about the life of one person instead of about the four seasons of a single year; but these facts aside, there is an unmistakable similarity both of mood and of manner. It is not merely, of course, that both deal with a peasantry wedded to the soil, and part of an enduring pattern of life, or that both, with all their intimate knowledge of the narrowness and hardness of this pattern, find it nevertheless beautiful. Each, besides, has created a form distinctly different from that of the conventional narrative—a form, and a movement which serve in themselves to suggest the rhythm of the life described.

The individuals and the background are conceived as part of the same whole, the events of human life—birth and marriage, child-bearing and death—are one with the growing of the crops or the increase of the herds and though this is not—indeed cannot be—said, the conduct of the story is such as to make it inescapably felt. Human life is not, as in more sophisticated societies it tends to become, something which has freed itself from the rhythm of nature and which struggles to form a pattern of its own, but instead something which submits itself to the pattern of the seasons and the regular laws of growth, seed-bearing, and decay. Every human event is integrated with nature and it is the triumph of the style never to fail in achieving that integration.

In January came a dry frozen time, hard and cold. Each cow made a long white breath in the morning air. Henry worked all day at fencing, and Ellen was never done finding wood and bringing it to the cabin to keep the fire on the hearth. In the night sometimes lonely horse-hoofs went galloping along the beaten mould of the pasture road, thumping on the frozen dirt. The sound would waken her with a thrill of pleasure, a joy at being awakened for any purpose, at feeling herself suddenly alive again. Into the joy would come a sadness at the lonely throb of the horses' feet that were going, the unspeakable loneliness that settled down on the road and the yard, on the cabin and her own body, as the pulse of the hoofs beat dimmer on her ears and faded farther and farther away. Her mother's words would call out in the lonely stillness of her mind: "Where's the fellows that ought to be a-comen? . . . A big brown girl, nigh to eighteen and no fellows a-comen!" . . . The taunt had come upon her unprepared and now the words would probe the still dark after the passer was gone. . . . "Where's the fellows that ought to be a-comen?"

"Poetic" is an adjective which one hesitates to apply to a piece of fiction. It is likely to be misunderstood, to suggest the feeble, expansive sentiment which seems to pass with many for poetry. But it is the only word which will serve to characterize either the form or the effect of Miss Roberts's novel. Her manner of handling her material, of returning to certain themes almost as to a refrain, suggests the architecture of poetry rather than of narrative, and certainly the mood which she creates in her reader is a poetic mood, leading him to participate in a kind of life radically different from any which he is likely to have led. We have

gained much by freeing ourselves to some extent from nature, by being no longer as intimately a part of her as once we were; but we have lost something too. We have specialized our consciousness so that if it has modes unknown to the more primitive, it is no longer so intensely aware of the total process of living, so joyously participant in the mere vital surge of universal life. The crops which nourish us grow where we do not see or feel them grow; we are heated in winter and fanned in summer so that the very seasons are half remote; and thus we have become creatures apart, no longer in step with the procession from which we have turned aside. Miss Roberts has succeeded somehow in recapturing the more primitive rhythm and, without too much idealizing the life she describes, in suggesting its compensations. Her people have in their existence something of the deep, quite satisfaction which one sometimes fancies a tree to have and they bear their calamities, too, with the resigned patience of nature.

I have compared this novel to Reymont's tetralogy and, putting the relative smallness of the scale aside, Miss Roberts's book does not suffer much from the comparison. Like Reymont, Miss Roberts seems absolutely saturated in her material and capable of using it with a freedom which suggests rather an intimate experience than any laborious documentation. Moreover she seems to owe little to any of the schools of fiction which have hitherto busied themselves with the treatment of American provincial life. Her mood is original, powerful, and, without ever verging upon sentimentality, tender.

Blondes Need Not Apply

A PRINCE OF MALAYA. By SIR HUGH CLIFFORD. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by H. G. DWIGHT

Author of "The Emperor of Elam and Other Stories"

IN a country which delights to twist the lion's tail, which pays higher prices for New England maple of the eighteenth century than for Italian walnut of the sixteenth, and in which the press is organized primarily for the benefit of that formidable reading public made up of schoolgirls, shopgirls, telephone girls, clubwomen, and clerks, and boosters of both sexes, it is not so simple a matter to set forth as they deserve the merits of Sir Hugh Clifford. One almost hesitates to mention that he is a distinguished colonial administrator of forty years' experience, who has spent twenty years in Malaya, thirteen in West Africa, and is now Governor of Ceylon. It is safer to say that he is the husband of the lady who writes under the name of Mrs. Henry de la Pasture. One can add, to be sure, that he himself is the author of some fifteen or twenty books, the greater number of which are set against the aching Asiatic background he knows so well. And they have an enviable place, in that literature of adventure, and interpretation in which England is so rich. Yet how shall one out with the dread news that to heart-throbs and to happy endings Sir Hugh is indifferent, save in so far as they may profit the brown-skinned folk to whom he ministers? Nor does he gild his pill either with Kipling's glitter or with Conrad's cloudy magnificence. That he not only is a very human person, but has the gift of communicating the incommunicable, "In Court and Kampong," "In a Corner of Asia," "The Downfall of the Gods," "Malayan Monochromes," and "The Further Side of Silence" bear moving witness. But "A Prince of Malaya" would at once set a movie director to thinking how its rather modest heart-interest might be magnified, how its costumes—or the lack of them—might be touched up, and how its tropical settings might be helped out with the exuberance of California.

One of the most characteristic differences between England and America is that we have no tradition of colonial service and no sustained interest in dark and distant portions of the earth. Imagine, for instance, an American *Blackwood's*! You can't. There would be nobody to write for it and nobody to read it. The reason is that we have not had colonies for three hundred years. We have been too busy making livable the old English colony which we inhabit. It is, therefore, the easier for those amongst us who feel the divine afflatus descend upon them to forget the bar sinister that darkens our own origin, and to wax eloquent over the horrors of imperialism, the rapacity of monarchs, the iniquity of government without the consent of

the governed. The fact remains, nevertheless, that our flag waves over States of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and California, over a Territory of Alaska, and a Panama Canal Zone, and over other unconsidered trifles scattered in several seas. What is more, we now have a considerable body of citizens who admit either personal acquaintance or family associations with our island possessions. And the rest of us are gradually become aware that they exist; perhaps even that they present problems which require other solutions than eloquence on Capitol Hill. However we got them, we have them, and we must in some way deal with them. For which reasons, as well as because there are bonds of geography, and of blood between the Malay Peninsula and the Philippine Islands, this story of a Malay Prince who was destroyed by his white man's education is not so foreign to us as a seeker after heart-throbs might imagine. It is an expert human document of a kind which the orators of the Little Brown Brother do not possess. In fact a Commission of Inquiry preparing for a junket to Manila on an army transport could find no better nucleus for its library than the books of Sir Hugh Clifford. For if one thing about him be more transparent than another, it is that for all his hard practical experience he is the most conscientious, and the most sympathetic of oversea administrators.

For the rest, his latest book is a reprint of two earlier ones—"Sally, a Study" (1904), and "Saleh, a Sequel" (1908)—which perhaps contains the quintessence of Sir Hugh's long residence in Pahang. He says of it that "the tragedy of Saleh, and the fashion in which it is here related alike belong to a period which has passed away." Perhaps. But the same tragedy is being enacted today in many another land and island of the sea. And while the manner in which a book is written nowadays interests us more than its matter, in that we are again passing through one of those periodical fits of rebellion against the manners and mannerisms of our fathers, one can only hope it will be long before the fashion passes quite away of writing a story so simply, so unpretentiously, with so much reticence and wisdom, as "A Prince of Malaya."

W. J. Locke's Latest

PERELLA. By WILLIAM J. LOCKE. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1926. \$2.

TO have established a reputation for pleasing whimsicality is an excellent asset for any author. For it permits him a license in the creation of situation and incident denied to less fortunate craftsmen whose divagations from the normal may have no less reason but less charm than his own. Mr. Locke's exaggerations of sentiment and action—the sort of gentle absurdity which characterizes most of his books—arouse no belligerent disbelief in the mind of the reader for they so obviously are believed by their author. Since Mr. Locke so whole-heartedly thinks that human beings are actuated by the kind of Quixotic impulses which sway his characters, perhaps they are; certainly he can make them attractive in their impulsiveness, and make the chronicle of their adventures both interesting and charming.

Moreover, Mr. Locke has a happy facility in dialogue, the ability to make his personalities converse with a cleverness that amuses but that yet escapes being bookish. The opening pages of "Perella," with the inconsequential give and take between the heroine who gives title to the book and the youth who draws her from her self-obliterating shyness, establish at once Mr. Locke's possession of this facility in his latest novel as well as in his earlier tales. It carries his overlong story through its initial lighter phases and sustains it in its more tragic developments. And it leaves, as does the pathetically futile attempt of Mr. Locke's elderly lovers to secure the happiness of a younger couple, a warm sense of the tenderness which is the prime feature of their author's creed.

Readers of Locke will recognize "Perella" as running true to the type of its predecessors. It is romantic, it is gentle, it is sprightly; it entangles its young hero and heroine, both of them English artists working in Florence, and their elders, a shy, and high-minded art critic and a middle-aged and beautiful patroness of art, in a noose of loyalties and passions, and it attempts to extricate them by a characteristically Lockian Quixotism. Attempts, we say, because Mr. Locke has supplied a much truer and more artistic conclusion if a less happy one, than the success of his device could have provided. Indeed, for all its wash of the romantic there is sound

interpretation and subtle character drawing in "Perella," as well as humor and a certain winsome, if wayward, worldliness which consorts oddly with its whimsicality. It is a pleasant book, with something more than grace to lend it flavor.

The Artist's Ego

FAR END. By MAY SINCLAIR. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1926.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

MISS SINCLAIR is too seasoned a craftsman to produce anything uninteresting, too attentive an observer of life to be wholly superficial. But she is not at her best in this tale of feminine constancy and masculine promiscuity, and, what is more, she is frankly sentimental in solving its complications. A swift moving narrative, "Far End" takes in the war and the post-Armistice years in its stride, and incidentally disposes of a secondary love story before bringing its main one to a happy conclusion.

Being herself, Miss Sinclair is of course preëminently interested in the psychological reactions of her characters. What engrosses her primarily is not the house, which gives its name to the story and plays *deus ex machina* to its protagonists, or the war, which precipitates their problems, but the sex conflict, the battle of the woman to hold the love of her husband after she is not only wife but mother, of the man to hold all of her thought, and failing that to reconcile his love for her with the satisfaction of his self love through other women. The theme is an old one, but in its application to the artist—in this case, a novelist—one of perduring interest. Miss Sinclair has the skill to handle it, but she has chosen to treat it crudely. Indeed, so perfunctory is her filling in of background, so little searching her analysis, and so obviously contrived her happy ending as to suggest that her story—perhaps through the pressure of her publishers—was born ahead of time. To be sure, she has at times deftly indicated her apprehension of the deeper instincts that impel her characters to action, and she has managed to make the distinction she aims at between the genuine love of the hero for his wife and the spurious affection he bestows on her rivals, but by manipulating her situations to a preconceived purpose she has failed to make them convincing. And she has rushed her story to a baldly sentimental conclusion.

That story, briefly to summarize it, recounts the engagement, marriage, estrangement, and reconciliation of Hilda Courtney and the talented young novelist, Christopher Vivart. Christopher, whose novels succeed each other to a swelling chorus of praise, is in the full flush of happiness and success when the war breaks out and rushes him and the friend who is engaged to his sister to France. There Christopher is wounded, invalided home, and thrust back into the happy security of life at Far End to have the delight in that home which his wife shares with him blasted by the loss of his brother-in-law and the death of his sister. Unable to endure the place which has now become so full of tragic memories Hilda and he move to London. There a child is born to them. The close association between husband and wife is not, despite the latter's premonitions, affected by the obligations which motherhood imposes, but when a second, and puny baby follows the first, Hilda, finds her wifely interests submerged in her maternal instincts. Instead of assisting her husband with his writing she allows him to employ a secretary, a flagrantly worshipping young woman who shortly begins to exert a powerful attraction over Christopher. Perhaps the most successful portion of Miss Sinclair's book is this in which she depicts the growth of a passion called forth by purely sensual charms, nurtured by an outspoken admiration, and precipitated by the revelation by the wife to her husband of his secretary's love for him. Miss Sinclair makes it quite clear that Christopher, while yielding to Nona, still preserves his devotion to his wife, as she makes it quite clear in the episode which follows upon his renunciation of Nona, that he again still loves his wife while he is once more surrendering himself to the advances of another woman. In both instances she makes it plain that the root of Christopher's infatuation lies in his self-love, played upon in the one case by the frank adoration of an inferior mind, and in the other by the skilful manipulation of his longing for self-expression by a clever and experienced woman. But she fails to make her characters real, their emo-

tion moving, or their actions convincing. There is no subtlety to her delineation, no distinction in her choice of incident, and the sudden happy conclusion to which she brings her complications is quite as adventitious as her earlier elimination of a no longer necessary secondary hero and heroine. "Far End" will not add to her reputation.

Tyranny

WAYS OF ESCAPE. By NOEL FORREST. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1926.

Reviewed by GRACE FRANK

ONE reads this novel in the light of the publisher's puff with a growing sense of bewilderment. The tale begins promisingly enough. Stephen Heath, a gracious and courteous man, a successful architect, efficiently and unselfishly devoted to the best interests of the community in which he lives, is shown through the chatter of his four children in their schoolroom to be unloved and unrespected in his own home, a domestic tyrant who has already driven these youngsters into the byways of furtiveness and deceit. The crushing effects of Stephen's tyranny upon all those associated with him—his children, his wife, his friend, his fellow-citizens—and their disastrous attempts to escape make up the rest of the story.

Unfortunately, as it proceeds, one realizes more and more clearly that an excellent theme with striking possibilities is being ruined in the telling. Where subtle analysis and delicate characterization were obviously demanded, only conventional and hackneyed conceptions have been supplied. Modern situations—incredible as it may seem, we are supposedly dealing with the post-war generation—appear in the bustling verbiage and trailing sentiments of the Elsie books. The pompous hero, stiffly complacent to the end, his rebellious children, forced to lie and steal, his beautiful and preposterous wife, his imperturbably sentimental friend, and even the author himself all seem to have inherited their speech and emotions from the dusty, paper-backed novels in the attic. For four hundred and twenty-seven pages they say things like "as she touched him, she felt him recoil as from an unclean thing" and "for very shame he could not but vow to rid himself of that craven fear which had been the curse of his life." Between them they exhaust the vocabulary of mock-heroics—the tale progresses for the most part by means of their various conversations—and spoil a theme that richly deserved a more plausible development.

And yet, according to the jacket, this "is one of those extremely rare first novels upon which the various members of the publisher's staff enthusiastically agree as to its possibilities for wide popularity." One can only suggest in all sadness that the staff seems to have a pretty low opinion of us privates.

Light Reading

THE ROAD. By JACK LONDON. New York: Greenberg, Inc. 1926.

Reviewed by JIM TULLY

THIS is the diluted story of Jack London's tramp days, now offered as one of the Rogue's Library. It is the epitome of London's weakness as a writer and a man. There is an introduction written by Glenn Mullin, a college professor hobo. London received a small fortune for the serial rights of this book. A real story of tramps cannot be made to fit into a widely circulated magazine. Jack London knew this. But poor Jack was the most wretched prostitute that ever walked down an alley of literature for money. As defiant as a sophomore about social conditions, he worried about the poor and died wealthy.

I was a beggar boy reading in a library when I first read of London. I walked into the freezing street with the feeling that if London could do it—so could I. It took me a great many years to realize the weakness of the magnetic vagabond who preceded me. My conclusion now is that London said all he had to say early. He then sold slag in order to buy a three thousand acre ranch. The ranch was always the white elephant in his parade of life.

London touches one chapter in this book which might have been made to rank with Dostoevsky's "House of the Dead." Instead, the inhibited middle class American drew back afraid. He even nearly admits his fear. It is the chapter in which he starts to tell of his term in the Erie County (New York) jail.