

Points of View

S. O. S.

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

Have we made fun enough of the various schemes for, "French at sight," "French in twelve lessons,"—"in a fortnight,"—"made easy,"—"by the direct method,"—in short, French advertised like miraculous pills, or painless tooth pulling! And now, we professionals, come to propose exactly similar schemes for the imparting of literature to our students. And yet it takes only a little thought to realize that such methods are, if possible, even less in place in that field than in language. Why not elementary metaphysics in University Extension Courses, or integral calculus in Kindergarten grade, or the mysteries of the universe in ten lessons?

Of course one can say that in France also they have elementary and short Histories of French Literature; but besides the fact that for the understanding of French literature you can leave unsaid in France a good many things which cannot be taken for granted here, their "manuels" are of comparatively very respectable size. The best known, at this hour, are Abry, Audic & Crouzet, and Desgranges, which although called "short," still count respectively 658 pages and 1,008 pages; Lanson has 1,150; Doumic, 632; and one of the shortest ones, Pellissier's "Précis," has 548 pages of small print. In America we had something about corresponding in Wright's "History of French Literature," 964 pages, or Dargan and Nitze's, 781 pages. But for some years now, a tendency has been gaining ground which expresses itself in throwing more and more ballast overboard, and boldly shortening the short histories of French Literature to 400, 350, even 300 pages. In vain did those who felt the danger of hopeless superficiality and flimsiness, protest, discreetly at first, louder lately, things grew worse and worse . . . and now the time has come when a warning should be made public.

A few days ago a little volume landed on our desk, printed by one of our leading American firms of text-books, prepared by a young lady Licenciée-es-Lettres, Université de Paris: the book is called "Précis de Littérature Française."

This is really *le chef-d'œuvre du genre*. Imagine a complete History of French Literature (one of the very richest literatures in the world), and selections from the great authors, and abundant pictures, and "Questionnaires" for oral work based on the lessons of the book, and suggestions for written work also based on the lessons, and suggestions for collateral reading—all in 231 pages of an average of 250 words to the page (for, some of them are partly blank, or partly taken by pictures).

All Voltaire takes five pages, including ½ p. for pictures, ¼ pp. for selections, 1 p. for "questions et lectures."

All the eighteenth century theatre (meaning Marivaux, Beaumarchais, Diderot, Nivelle de la Chaussée, Sedaine), and poetry (for one puts gaily Beaumarchais in the same chapter with André Chénier) holds 2 pages, plus three pictures, plus 2 pages of the "Barbier de Séville" (—not even the Figaro monologue).

All Victor Hugo (life, works, pictures, selections, directions for exercises, and readings) fills six pages and three lines.

And watch the inspiring Questions. On p. 86 a letter by Mme. de Sévigné begins: "Ma fille je vais encore vous parler de M. de Turenne. . . ." Question: "Est ce la première lettre que Madame de Sévigné écrit sur ce sujet?"

No, really: *De qui se moque-t-on ici?* Witness the results: p. 231: Question 1, of concluding chapter: "Faites un tableau synoptique des écrivains français que vous avez étudiés (!) en les classant *verticalement* par époques, *horizontalement* par genres." So, a checker board of names is the result! . . . And *not one* of the names can possibly mean anything to the pupil. "Des écrivains que vous avez étudiés!" What a prodigious profanation of the word *étudier*: But this is madness. If this is "study," let us close our schools and go " . . . chercher sud la terre un endroit écarté, u, d'être homme d'étude, on ait la liberté!"

In all fairness, however, one must keep in mind that this is only a particularly fine sample of the sort of books becoming the fashion now; and again, besides the "survey courses" proper, there are many volumes of selections prepared for survey courses and which are just as bad, scrappy, quick, movy-type—but not exciting at all!

The argument to excuse such nonsense

we know well, better half a loaf,—they keep on saying,—than nothing at all. But this is not half a loaf, neither a quarter of a loaf, nor an eighth of a loaf. There is no nourishment to it at all. Or would you consider that one spoonful of soup, and one bite of fish, and one of meat, and one of salad, and one mouthful of ice cream, constitute even a fraction of a meal? Offer a plate of soup and nothing else, or a dish of meat and nothing else, or a saucer of pudding, or even a crust of bread: this would be different. And something of this sort is entirely feasible in our case. Calculate the time at your disposal, and examine how much material you can "study," and limit the scope of your course accordingly. Take some of the authors of the classical period in France, or some of the period preceding the modern era (eighteenth century), or of the romantic period,—and be done with it. Or do what Mornet of the Sorbonne just proposed ("Histoire Générale de la Littérature Française," 21ème partie, Larousse, 1925): Take not even an author, but a few representative works: One "Essai" of Montaigne, two or three plays by Corneille, Racine, or Molière, some "Caractères" of La Bruyère, Rousseau's "Emile," Lamartine's "Méditations," Hugo's "Contemplations," etc. This is sensible; while to give a string of names and titles and dates will ever remain utterly useless, and, of course, distasteful to the student.

ALBERT SCHINZ.

Smith College.

Baring or Horace?

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

When Mr. Freeman Day accuses me of a bad break, he seems to take it for granted that, even though I have published a volume of pervasions entitled "Including Horace," I never heard of Q. Horatius. Had Mr. Day read the complete poem by Maurice Baring—the first quatrain of which I quoted in my review—he would have seen why the vein is Georgian-bucolic rather than Roman fatalistic. Mr. Baring's title as well as the plot of "Diffugere Nives" is, it is true, taken from Horace, but the tone of voice, the polite platitudes, the clichés are entirely Mr. Baring's. Mr. Day will look in vain through the Horatian ode for the "starred grass," the "buttercups," the "singing blackbirds," and the other properties which are so recognizably the adjuncts of the present pastoral reaction in English verse. Mr. Baring's "paraphrase" is as definitely "in the more recent tradition" as Thomas Campion's version of "Integer Vitæ" is, in spite of its adherence to the Latin original, distinctly Elizabethan.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

New York.

Mr. Blau Replies

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

Mr. Lewisohn has succeeded in crowding not a few errors within the short compass of his charmingly urbane letter in which he has seen fit to reply to my review of his book called "Israel."

He is quite mistaken to think—

That my approval of his book is grudging: this depends, obviously, on the measure of praise expected;

That, as he seems to imply, rabbinical lore is incompatible with literary ability: it simply is not;

That, conversely, literary ability or fondness for fine writing stamps a man, *eo ipso*, as an Earth-Man, an Am-ha-aretz: *non sequitur*;

That he himself belongs to the tribe of Earth-men like Herzl and Nordau: he rather belongs, by virtue of this thought, to the tribe of Ahad-Haam (Asher Ginzberg), who, far from being an Am-ha-aretz, is well-versed in rabbinical lore;

That men possessing both rabbinical lore and some literary skill have not in the past said those things which suddenly engaged Mr. Lewisohn's attention: they did;

That, if they did, they said them (to quote him) "in such a manner as would not persuade many people to listen" on the contrary, they were listened to, although it is a thousand pities that Mr. Lewisohn was not among their hearers or readers.

Plainly, the Prodigal Son has been away for too long a spell from his Father's House to possess the inside information that might have saved him from this imposing array of errors.

JOEL BLAU.

London.

A Rhymed Review

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

Enclosed herewith you will find a rhymed review of Christopher Morley's "Thunder on the Left," written by Keturah Rollinson, a student in one of my classes.

BURGES JOHNSON.

First we see a children's party,
Where the merriment is hearty
And is hale.
They play games for us and dine us
And present a mouse that's minus
Any tail.

Next we see them when they're grown-up,
And their weaknesses are shown up:—
Each mistake,
Each misplacement of affection,
And a certain predilection
Toward cake.

When a man in conversation
Says "depot" instead of "station,"
Sense-bereft,
Then our minds are in a jumble,
And we hear the thunder rumble
On the left.

On the sleeping-porch above us
Are three little tots who love us,
Sweet and small.
Look! They lean upon the railing,
And the frail support is failing.
They will fall.

Now, loud the thunder's rumble,
As the three wee figures tumble
With the rail!
(Oh, what a nightmare house, that!)
But they're rescued by a mouse that
Lacks a tail.

Yes, the whole was just a vision,
And our ultimate decision—
With a wail—
That the chapters just entwine us
With a mouse, moreover minus
Any tale.

"By Any Other Name"

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

Why not "Skunk Cabbage"? The author of your leading editorial for Saturday the fifteenth would seem to be a better botanist than patriot or poet. How many of us who early learned to recognize *simplicarpus foetidus* as the harbinger of spring would have been edified to know that "its leaves when crushed had the raucous odor of musk"? What was musk to us or we to the musk deer? But skunk was our friend the pole cat. And what is wrong with cabbage, that magnificent vegetable which we might well use in decoration as the Greek used his acanthus, that great green rose of the truck patch, nursery of vitamins and succulent storage of wholesome winter fare?

And why not blood root? In a rich language the poetry of nomenclature should have many moods. And do not the wind flowers blow beside the blood root and spring beauties troop at the edge of the woods and Quaker ladies stand in the field and soft little mouse ear? The advancing season will range in suggestion from the Indian's pipe to Bethlehem's star, but could any name hint a grace or a mystery more likely to open the mind of a child to poetry than the uncanny thrill of finding on his hand the blood of a little white lily?

Anyone who dislikes the silly name of dogtooth violet has the option of using the equally common name of adder's tongue. And if he has so far forgotten the sensuous interests of his childhood as to have no fondness for the name of milkweed let him say butterfly weed and celebrate the hoverings of black and orange wings over a flower that, in either of its colors, well sets off the butterfly.

Dogwood is now a meaningless name, and better so. Let lesser beauties claim reference, it needs no metaphor. A "tulipoplar" is surely a poplar with a difference. We often call it tulip tree. We might have found other names for those flowers with pale flames for petals, red at the base and yellow at the tip, and for the strenuous lift of limb that bears them. But surely the best name for those great candelabra with the globes of cool fire comes from the simple marriage of the tulip with the tree.

Shad bush? That, too, we accept. What is this dyspeptic complaint that would have spring only a matter of airy visions and "a thousand sonnets," spring that draws up the sweet sap in the maple and calls the fish back to the streams, that sets the foot of man again in the furrow and lifts his eyes to range. Do let us enjoy the thawed earth beneath our feet and the sun on our backs, and when Nature shakes out white flowers to signal that the shad have returned to the river let us think on our hungry antecedents

and regard the bush with gratitude and taste spring with every sense.

The world is so full of a number of things that we can be lavish with their names. The robin was named for a memory and the cat bird for a joke, the kingbird in the orchard for his crown and his courage, the cardinal for gorgeously clad churchmen in Europe and the high hole for his nest in the woods. So be it. And the turkey buzzard let us think of exactly as he is—a bird that eats our dead sheep and then rises on mighty wings to glide and sail in the forehead of the wind, lifting our hearts with his glorious motion, a creature that, like man, can gorge and also soar.

ALICE S. CHEYNEY.

Washington, D. C.

The New Books

(Continued from page 844)

Poetry

MONICA, Or the Chronicle of Marcus.
By SAMUEL VALENTINE COLE. Marshall Jones. 1926. \$1.50.

In the poem founded on the life and character of the mother of St. Augustine, we have a religious poem of dignity and charm, never ridiculous, never insincere, a simple tale that if not enthralling is at least reasonably interesting. In narrative blank verse interspersed with lyrics in the manner of "Idyls of the King" it tells how a child of faith grew to girlhood, married a pagan, was disappointed in his worldliness, prayed, gave birth to a pagan, was hurt by the boy's worldliness, prayed, and finally found happiness and untold joy in the conversion and belief of her son.

The characters are human, and the verse sufficiently imaged and alive to carry the story easily—

*Prayer is not taking God's hand to lead
Him,
But to be led of Him.*

the workmanship is careful and the point of view in good taste. There is really only one criticism—cautiousness. If Mr. Cole wrote no inane line he wrote no remarkably good one. It is perhaps too much to demand that poetry be great, but it is certainly not necessarily to be presumed that it is good because it is not inane. Balance is here. Control is here. The work is quiet, careful, thoughtful, and—un-inspired. And so, perhaps because of a lack of that more than compensating greatness that sometimes is coupled with the inane, the poem is less for the layman than for those who are already religiously inclined and who have themselves an interest in the subject that is here presented faithfully and well.

CASEMENTS. By Richard Clondesley Savage. Dutton. \$2.

NEW VERSE. By Robert Bridges. Oxford University Press. \$2.

BALLADS AND SONGS OF THE SHANTY-BOY. Collected and edited by Franz Rickaby. Harvard University Press. \$3.50.

THE POET'S MIDNIGHT SERENADE. Translated by Angelo de Lucas. Privately printed.

TROILUS AND CRISEYDE. By Geoffrey Chaucer. Edited by Robert Kilburn Root. Princeton University Press. \$6 net.

POEMS. By Robert Louis Stevenson (Everyman's Library). Dutton. 80 cents.

NOTATIONS FOR A CHIMERA. By Herbert S. Gorman. Milton I. D. Einstein, 295 Fifth Ave., New York.

Travel

THE PARIS THAT'S NOT IN THE GUIDE BOOKS. By BASIL WOON. Brentanos. 1926. \$2.

A more exact title for this book would be, "A Guide to the *Paris Herald*," Basil Woon manages to include in it a bit of gossip about some 250 members of the American colony whose names keep recurring in that official bulletin of Parisian America.

If one desires to know the specialties of the many bars and cabarets catering to Americans, along with a bit of the history of each one, the present book is to be highly recommended; the information in it is detailed and accurate. The habitués of the Ritz bar, of Henry's, of the New York bar, the superiority of the small room at Ciro's to the large one, the atmosphere of a gala night at the Chateau de Madrid and of a Sunday night at the Ritz, the proper method of procedure during a swing around the night clubs of Montmartre, and the best way of sight-seeing in Montparnasse, are all described. For the most part the author's histories of "American institutions in Paris" are interesting and amusing. As much cannot be said for the gossip that fills most of the book; it is largely cheap and insipid.

The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

SALE OF SET OF SIGNERS

THE historical library of Dr. George C. F. Williams of Hartford, Conn., including books, pamphlets, broadsides, and autographs and documents, mainly of the Revolutionary War period, was sold at the Anderson Galleries May 17 and 18, in four sessions, 879 lots bringing \$74,112. Rare book dealers and collectors were in attendance in full force and showed a lively interest in the sale. Competition was keen, bidding lively, and prices generally were high.

Naturally interest centered in the sale of the set of Signers. There were some duplicates, but a set composed of one each of the best specimens, sold separately, brought a total of \$37,688.50. A document signed by Button Gwinnett brought \$19,000; an inlaid signature of Gwinnett from the collection of Charles C. Jones, Jr., of Georgia, sold for \$10,500. A full fine signature of Thomas Lynch, Jr., written on the back of an engraved frontispiece to "The Tragedies of Sophocles," London, 1759, fetched \$5,200. Other high priced items in the set were D. S. of Samuel Adams, 2 pp., folio, Province of Massachusetts Bay, In House of Representatives, May 27, 1773, one of the most important and daring resolutions leading to the Revolution, sold for \$560; A. L. S. of Benjamin Franklin, 2 pp., 4to, Philadelphia, December 2, 1762, written immediately after his return from England, whence he had gone to plead the cause of the Colonies, \$510; A. L. S. of Joseph Hewes, 2 pp., 4to, Edenton, October 7, 1775, in regard to preparation for the war, \$1,000; A. L. S. of Arthur Middleton, 2 pp., 12 mo., N.p., N.d., \$2,700; A. L. S. of Edward Rutledge, 2 pp., folio, Philadelphia, July 20, 1776, \$850.

In the last fourteen years five sets of

distinction of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence have been sold at auction. In 1912, the Danforth set, sold in Philadelphia, brought \$14,873.50; in 1922, an Emmet set sold *en bloc* at Anderson's, \$19,750; in 1924, the Thomas set sold in Philadelphia, \$26,502; January 19 of this year the Manning set, sold at Anderson's, \$46,925.50; and now, the Williams set, greatly inferior to the Manning set, \$37,688.50. When the quality is considered the Williams set brought quite as high prices as the Manning set.

Other interesting lots and the prices realized were the following:

Stamp Act. "Authentic Account of the Proceedings of the Congress held at New York, in 1765, on the Subject of the Stamp Act," 8vo, morocco, London, 1767. One of two contemporary printed accounts of this Congress. \$97.50.

Bolton (Thomas). "An Oration delivered March Fifteenth, 1775, small 4to, morocco by Bedford, Boston, 1775. "A burlesque oration delivered in disguise from the balcony of the Boston Coffee-House. \$92.50.

Broadside. A proclamation by Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut announcing the death of General Montgomery and calling for troops, January 27, 1776. \$160.

Calef (John). "The Siege of Penobscot by the Rebels," etc., folding colored charts, 8vo, half morocco, London, 1781. \$250.

Colden (Cadwallader). "The Conduct of Colden, Esq., Lieutenant Governor of New York," etc., small 8vo, cloth, London, 1765. \$80.

Mante (Thomas). "The History of the Late War in North-America, and the Islands of the West-Indies, including the Campaigns of 1763 and 1764, against his Majesty's Indian Enemies," maps, 4to,

morocco, London, 1772. Fine copy. \$270.

Paine (Thomas). "A Dialogue between the Ghost of General Montgomery just arrived from the Elysian Fields; and an American Delegate, in a Wood near Philadelphia," 8vo, wrappers, Philadelphia, 1776. Very few copies recorded. \$70.

Penobscot Expedition. "The Proceedings of the General Assembly, and of the Council, of the State of Massachusetts, relating to the Penobscot Expedition," small 4to, wrappers, Boston, 1780. Rare official account. \$365.

Stevens (B. F.). "Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-1783," etc., 25 vols., folio, morocco, London, 1889-1898. Only 200 copies printed. \$550.

Bigelow (John). "John Bigelow's Private Remarks 1776," 22 pp., 4to, April 15 to August 10, 1776. Revolutionary manuscript Journal. \$260.

Greene (Nathaniel). Original manuscript Orderly Book, apparently kept at Headquarters by various adjutants and assistant adjutants, during General Greene's campaign in the South from April 5, 1781, to September 4, 1781, 72 pp., 4to, original vellum. An important Revolutionary journal at a critical period. \$770.

Montgomery (Gen. Richard). A. L. S., 4 pp., folio, Camp near St. John's, October 5, 1775. Account of the Canadian campaign written to his brother-in-law, Robert R. Livingston, Jr. \$375.

Washington (George). A. L. S., 3 pp., 4to, Mount Vernon, October 3, 1798, to his nephew, William Augustine Washington. Account of his family genealogy. \$960.

NOTE AND COMMENT

AN exhibition of recent European examples of fine book and commercial printing has been held in the New York Times Annex and has attracted a great deal of attention. The specimens exhibited

were collected in Europe by Henry Lewis Bullen, curator of the Typographic Library, and Museum of the American Type Founders Company of Jersey City, and included examples of fine color printing, lithography and all forms of art and commercial printing from France, Italy, Germany, Austria, and Hungary.

The Roycrofters at their shops in East Aurora have brought out a handsome memorial edition of Elbert Hubbard's "A Message to Garcia." It consists of photographic reproductions of the original manuscript on Japanese vellum, the whole enclosed in a beautiful leather portfolio. Each portfolio contains a portrait of Elbert Hubbard and several pages of typewritten manuscript, corrected in his own handwriting. The edition is limited to 495 copies.

A contribution for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre fund has been opened in Japan by the *Osaki Mainichi*, one of the foremost daily newspapers of Japan which publishes both Japanese and English editions. In recent years the Japanese have been ardent admirers of Shakespeare and all of his plays have been translated into Japanese.

In its series of colotype facsimiles of literary curiosities, the Oxford University Press issues a slender volume containing Jane Austen's "Plan of a Novel According to Hints from Various Quarters," with opinions on "Mansfield Park" and "Emma" collected and transcribed by her, and other documents. These are printed from the originals recently acquired by the British Museum and J. Pierpont Morgan, the more important ones being reproduced in facsimile by the colotype process. Only 350 copies have been printed in quarto form, bound in marble paper boards, with paper labels.

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