

# The Saturday Review

## of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

VOLUME III

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1926

NUMBER 13

### Red Paint

NO matter how incredibly romantic the tale or how incurably noble or irretrievably romantic the hero, every good writer thinks he has told the truth about human nature. Dickens never admitted that he was a sentimentalist, nor Scott that he spun yarns of fantastic ages, nor Byron that he made a cosmos out of a bit of Byron and a vast amount of air, some of it electrified and all of it hot. And you and I have such a craving for the sweeter, luckier, grander kinds of experience that it is strange, with such a choice in truths, we ever accept any that do not slip into our imaginations like ripe cherries.

Homo sapiens reads stories with unhappy endings, brooding poems, studies of futility, ruthless satires upon the weakness of the flesh, because, having seen much, he is sooner or later sure to ask for meanings. This is the excuse for realism and its guarantee of reward. But when a whole generation begins to peek and poke among the intimate failings of soiled lives, applauds imitations on the stage of closet follies, and gives its keenest interest to the dirtiest linen, there is something more than truth sought after.

Every man has doubled on his track. He began with romantic melodrama in the days of his naïve youth and now that he is sophisticated he is coming back to melodrama at the end. Melodrama is mild hysteria. In literature, it is a stir of the emotions not justified by the situation presented. The dramatist gets all there is in a scene, but the melodramatist asks for more. He wrings out a bucketful where one tear was enough. And nine-tenths of current morbidity, indecency, exoticism is melodrama. A solemn transcript of the intimate weaknesses of third-rate characters, like Dreiser's "An American Tragedy," has the virtue of high honesty and a fullness that satisfies, if it does not satiate, curiosity. But put it upon the stage, as has just been done, and one sees that its outline is just "Nelly the Beautiful Carpet Sweeper" over again, with private revelation and psychological remorse substituted for the outworn sentiment of the earlier piece. It is pretty good melodrama on the stage in spite of its platitudes, and likely to be popular, but that is not the point. Dreiser's own heavy dialogue and impossible transitions are not due to inaptitude, for he is a skilled journalist as well as an honest man, but are symptoms of the melodramatic character of the scene he presents. He is too obsessed with the sensational meannesses he finds in mean lives to care how he presents them; his vice is piling up detail for what, in spite of its *longueurs*, is a sensational effect.

The same may be said of many other books more skilful if far narrower than Dreiser's. Van Vechten's "Nigger Heaven," for example, is not so much a story as a guide book to the warmer parts of Harlem, and depends for success not upon fineness of characterization, but upon *outré* fact (interesting to be sure) and titillating sensation. This is a good example of the melodrama of realism, and there are hundreds of others. Indeed we are in for more and more of this sort of thing, and the playgoer and novel reader at the beginning of a season will have to take stock of their reactions. They will find a good deal of what once was private life presented for its privacy, and this involves no critical problem except for the police. But they will also encounter much lasciviousness advanced under the banner of "Now It Can Be Told," and

### Hospital Walls

By GLORIA GODDARD

WHITE?

Look close—

Their smooth flat surfaces,  
Like the sensitive wax of recording disks,  
Bear immortal history.

The unseen script of living  
Is traced upon these walls.

Invisible legends of life and death,  
Etched indelibly.

The pale thin wail of the newborn babe  
Sketched lightly—in that corner, there;

Yonder, in fading lines,

The sigh of a last farewell;

Close beside, almost splitting the plaster,

An agonized scream of pain;

A paean of joy for a dear life saved,

Drawn with flourish of hope on the ceiling;

And in between, and all around,

Faint sighs scrawl,

Deep moans smudge,

Hot tears blur,

Sad hopes falter,

Like a hand unschooled to write.

White walls?

Look close—.

### The New Britannica

(Inside and Out)

By C. K. OGDEN

Author of "The Meaning of Meaning"

BETWEEN the ages of ten and twenty-five the growing organism is prepared for the Battle with Death. So too with the Body of Knowledge. Between 1910 and 1925, it "just grew"—and after Topsy, the Autopsy. Its debonair grandsire the eighteenth, its heavy father the nineteenth, of a long line of centuries, were dissected and embalmed in those twelve monumental cenotaphs—the successive editions of the Encyclopædia Britannica as we have known it hitherto. But with the Resurrection at the dawn of the new century, a new Body was formed. Overshadowed in infancy, it grew slowly; but since 1910 its progress has been phenomenal, and now we can profitably take stock of the adolescent period, for the three new volumes of the Encyclopædia are before us.\*

Once upon a time the writing of encyclopædias was a glorious adventure, and if your work ever reached a conclusion, i. e. if you eventually got out of prison and could prevent the printers from mutilating your proofs at the last minute, you might even initiate a revolution. Diderot, as we know, was the Debs of Encyclopædists, and it is to Voltaire, who pronounced his achievement a compound of marble and wood, that we owe the description of the Royal supper-party in 1774 after the first twenty-one volumes had been suppressed. He tells us how the conversation turned on the nature of gunpowder; how Madame Pompadour complained that since the confiscation she had no idea what even her rouge or her stockings were made of; how the king thereupon sent for the volumes, and three servants eventually staggered in with a load which answered all the questions that had been raised; and how the next ten volumes were then sanctioned.

That was the moment chosen by "a society of gentlemen" in Scotland to launch the Encyclopædia Britannica. But with a very different motive, as is shown by the dedication of the two supplementary volumes in 1800, anent Diderot's "dissemination of the seeds of anarchy and atheism."—If they "shall in any degree counteract the tendency of that pestiferous work, even these two volumes will not be wholly unworthy of your Majesty's attention." Needless to say, no one has ever, before or since, accused the Britannica of radical or unsettling tendencies, nor are they likely to do so, as long as the judicious impartiality of Mr. Garvin is in evidence.

These three volumes, however, considerably larger in themselves than the entire first edition of 1771, are remarkable for the extent to which the barriers which have hitherto preserved the public from the inroads of modernity have been broken down. Thus, the Rev. J. M. Creed does not hesitate to expound Leuba's view that there is no essential difference between the so-called religious experience of the mystic and the illusions of narcotic intoxication: "Other psychologists have argued that religion is to be explained in terms of hallucinatory images formed by the mind, to which objective reality is wrongly ascribed." Diderot himself could scarcely ask for more.

This attempt to put at our disposal a means of understanding the material and intellectual forces

\*The present survey deals only with the three new volumes. But these are intended to be regarded as supplementing the 11th Edition, 1910 (so as to supersede the War Volumes, 1921, known as the 12th Edition), and forming with it a complete 13th Edition.

### This Week



"Jefferson." Reviewed by *Allen Johnson*.

"Murder for Profit." Reviewed by *Edmund Pearson*.

"Roundabout to Canterbury," "The Gentle Art of Tramping," and "London Nights." Reviewed by *May Lamberton Becker*.

"Animula Vagula." Reviewed by *Edward Davison*.

"The Pool." Reviewed by *Grace Frank*.

"Petenera's Daughter." Reviewed by *Louis Kronenberger*.

"My Mortal Enemy." Reviewed by *Lee Wilson Dodd*.

Miracles. By *Christopher Morley*.

### Next Week, or Later

"The Orphan Angel." Reviewed by *Henry Seidel Canby*.

"The Outlook for American Prose." Reviewed by *Ernest Boyd*.

the old, old stories rewritten with all that was left out for reticence' sake put back in shiny red paint. It may help the puzzled reader to consider that often this is just old Father Melodrama returning by the alley after being forcibly ejected through the front door. If sophisticated moderns who crave sensation won't take sentiment they will get their emotionalism under some other label. Beer goes out—synthetic gin comes in.



which have made the past fifteen years amongst the most momentous in history must be pronounced a triumph of publishing and organization by everyone who realizes the labor and goodwill that have gone to its making. In particular, a notable advance can be recorded in all that pertains to the American scene, and here the name of Mr. Hooper has to be joined with those of the Editor and Mr. Holland in awarding to all their due meed of praise. The gradual widening of the Britannica horizon is also evident in the effort to meet the needs of the average family as well as of the librarian and the specialist.

Never, we feel, has such a comprehensive record of human endeavor been offered in so small a compass. Amongst the contributions which no one can afford to miss are the masterly architectural survey by the designer of Bush House, supplemented by the study of City planning (which might with advantage have referred to Le Corbusier's visions of the Paris of tomorrow); Leon Gaster's description of the possibilities of artificial light; Professor Raymond Pearl's discussion of the possibilities of artificial rejuvenation (though both he and Serge Voronoff are agreed that we cannot yet altogether escape Death—or even, be it added, add to our expectation of life); Stefansson's survey of Arctic resources; Henry Ford on Mass Production; Professor Rankine on Sound; Professor R. W. Gregory on Color and Race; and the formidable sextet on the various aspects of Evolution.

The section on Archæology is another notable triumph of composite work, though strangely enough so eminent and active an archæologist as Mr. Harold Peake is not indexed; the unique account of the new developments of air photography in the detection of ancient sites, by O. G. S. Crawford, is embellished by a convincing illustration.

Many would have favored the adoption of the same method for the War itself, and will deplore the practice of splitting up the various military episodes whereby the world was made a Safe for Democracy—to which we have apparently lost the key. The recurrence every few pages of a purely strategic narrative, under the name of some arbitrarily selected battle or campaign, in addition to elaborate studies of the various fronts and full military histories of the different belligerent powers, gives the impression that the Britannica has never been properly demobilized.

The articles on Economics and Social Science are naturally scattered, and number about two hundred, supplemented by over a hundred biographies. The right man for the subject, as in 1910, has been sought, regardless of prejudices, and the result is a sense of freshness and authority which rivals even that of the slightly more technical Engineering contributions. These, by the way, the literary reader should not shirk, for the marvels of modern engineering are often reflected in a brilliant linguistic technique for grappling with the most intricate mechanical constructions. The Currency and Finance section, in twenty-four divisions, will be as valuable to everyone concerned with business and administration as the less complicated articles on commercial topics proper.

The practical note of Professor Ashley's central summary is echoed in the thoughtful essays of T. E. Gregory, Sir Josiah Stamp, Gustav Cassel, Moritz Julius Bonn, and even in the Cassandra-tones of Joseph Caillaux. The international scope of the work, too, is here seen to special advantage.

A special word of praise is necessary for many of the biographies. Mr. Ervine, in particular, is in his element on the subject of Shaw, and includes a brief excursus on the Shavian religion, showing how American influences were twice paramount. Mr. D. G. Hogarth tells the romantic story of Colonel Lawrence; and in the parallel column the secret is out that the author of "The White Peacock" has written a successful manual of modern history. In a word the new volumes have, where suitable, sufficiently subordinated the formal character which we associate with Encyclopædias to become readable and entertaining in the best sense.

Here is Trotsky assuring us that Lenin was courteous and attentive, especially to the weak and oppressed, and to children, and Freud explaining why medical hostility could not check the progress of psychoanalysis. Dr. E. J. Dillon refuses to believe "that Izvolsky was responsible for the World War," and G. B. S. tweaks the beard of Capitalism so violently that the editor has to launch a special bulletin to make it quite clear that Wall Street is still hale and hirsute. The author of "Thunder on the Left" gives us a brisk column on O. Henry, who "often

arouses the trained reader's amazement," while the sound scholars who believe that our language is going to the dogs will hear them barking in every line of Mr. Mencken's excellent essay on Americanisms. Joyce's "Ulysses," it appears, is "little known to the general public," Bela Kun "was a man of medium size, rather plump," and Noel Coward "has made himself an international figure." Mary Pickford's violet eyes smile at us from her niche alongside Doug., and even Charlie's feet twinkle through a respectful black-type blurb.

In the exact sciences, of course, the high standard of the main Encyclopædia is fully maintained. Sir Ernest Rutherford and Sir J. J. Thomson, the knights unerrant of physics, are ably assisted by Professors Bohr, Eddington, McLennan, Millikan, and Soddy. To get Mr. F. W. Aston to write, "Within a tumbler of water lies sufficient energy to propel the *Mauretania* across the Atlantic and back at full speed," and Einstein to assert that "we fare no better in our speculations than a fish which should strive to become clear as to what is water," is an achievement after which any editor might claim a long week-end.

Medicine, too, is well represented, and a fair balance is struck between the Clinicians and the Bacteriologists. Sir Humphry Rolleston, Professor L. F. Barker, Dr. Alexis Carrel, Hideyo Noguchi (Noguchi at II—474 as in both lists of contributors), Adolf Lorenz, Sir Almroth Wright, and Dr. Kinrier Wilson, all contribute of their best. The last named, by the way, has lately produced a manual for general practitioners embodying all the most recent work on speech defects, and Piéron's summary of continental experience over the last decade, in his popular exposition "Thought and the Brain," runs to over a hundred pages; but in spite of the fact that one of the chief medical results of the War was the stimulus it gave to Aphasia, even the single allusion to Dr. Henry Head in these volumes (III-257) does not get the subject indexed. Another missing entry is Chronaxy, with its far-reaching neurological implications; Bourguignon's contribution, for example.

But let the reader beware of getting a false impression from any captious remarks he may read by young men in a hurry to air their own omniscience. Such an enterprise as this cannot be judged by one or two lapses, however serious, nor yet by fifty. A few days ago the Chinese delegate at Geneva, on the pretext of presenting to the League of Nations a Chinese Encyclopædia, used his moments on the platform to insinuate a number of gratuitous statements about gunboats and cruisers on distant waters. Just as we cannot condemn the whole of China even for such a lapse as this, so we may hesitate to decry the Britannica because, as we shall contend, the analogy is not altogether inapplicable. Its methods and its material may frequently be at fault, but let us generously acknowledge the great stride an institution 158 years old has taken towards a renewal of those spacious days of Encyclopædia-making, when Pierre Bayle would write down all that he knew in alphabetical order, because he enjoyed doing it, with taste and gusto. Fresh breezes are blowing through these 3,000 pages, and a new and welcome spirit informs the majority of its 1,200 contributors. With this preamble, let us muster such reverence as befits an *advocatus diaboli* confronted by their labors.

## II

A just criticism, we readily admit, makes much of good points and only mentions flaws for the purpose of future improvement. Our sole reason for adding a second part to this survey is the supreme importance and outstanding merits of the new Britannica. It would be an easy and a pleasant task to continue to lay stress on those merits, but for the discerning reader every further inch devoted to this edition is actually a further compliment. The following notes, then, are designed primarily for persons who are already in possession of the volumes and who expect from the *Saturday Review* some indication of the extent to which their record of modern achievement can claim to be "complete."

Since any such probe in these degenerate days is liable to be misinterpreted, let it be explained at the outset that the Britannica survives the test with flying colors,—relatively to any other Encyclopædia in the world. But Homer's occasional surreptitious nod does not license the stertorous exhibitionism of his rivals. It is hardly necessary to state that the mention of an omission is not a demand for a biography. Every reader of the Britannica knows that only a very small proportion of those included are treated

separately. Omissions are judged by the comparative standards set in these volumes themselves and by the public claims to completeness which have been made for them. In other words, 90 per cent of the names he has looked for in vain are regarded by the reviewer as more important than 30 per cent of the corresponding inclusions. It should be possible for an inquirer at once to discover from these three thousand pages whether and whereby they are able, notable, or noble, *i.e.*, whether their success is due to brains, behavior, or blood.

The Britannica does not regard itself as impressionistic or eclectic, and it is not so regarded. The reader who failed at once to find Low or Weyl might complain that American Administration and the Universe respectively had been inadequately treated; so the Britannica has exalted each in its own way. Britons must just accept the fact (though they may balk at the misplaced and misprinted entry "Weil's hypothesis"), but when they hear the *cognoscenti* acclaiming Sacharoff and Robeson they will find that here their needs have been less carefully considered, though in both fields ample space has been devoted to numerous lesser personalities.

The criticism, then, is one of judgment and correlation rather than of policy or intention. The Britannica, in fact, has doubled its value by opening its pages to modernity, but it is not surprising that in such an intellectual hurricane the editorial trireme rocks a trifle. Every little while the oars do not beat in unison, and a crab is caught. Imagine, for instance, a man "temperamentally desperate, loving extremes, . . . almost querulously criticizing the world's workings." There is in fact such a miserable specimen of humanity. His name, according to the Britannica biography, is Bertrand Arthur William Russell. He "has been peculiarly successful in eliciting from contemporary physics those theorems that are most consonant with his own temper." Bearing that in mind, locate now the most crucial article in the whole three volumes, the one that requires for its composition the acutest, the astutest, the most balanced, and the best informed mind in Christendom. There is such an article. It is on Knowledge itself—what we can know and how we know it. And who does the editor select to write that article? The whole royal stable and all Cal's men will not induce me to give him away.

Something has gone wrong somewhere. As Mr. Russell himself writes: "I have read accounts of my own death in the newspapers, but I abstained from inferring that I was a ghost." Nay more: Mr. Russell visited Russia shortly after the war with the Labor delegation, and published a book expressing his disapproval of what he saw. He was subsequently appointed Professor of Philosophy in the University of Peking, being the first European thinker of first-class attainments to win the confidence of the East. The significance of such a contact for the future thought of the world has yet to be appreciated. The Britannica allows these events to be recorded as follows: "He travelled through China and Bolshevik Russia."

In the biography of F. H. Bradley we are informed that he "once and for all established the supremacy of idealism over realism, in dialectical controversy." On page 332 of Volume III, where modern thought says its last word, this is very properly contradicted—"It is a mistake to suppose that relativity adopts an idealistic picture of the world." But when we finally reach the Golden Gates behind which "there is found to be a residue not dependent upon the point of view of the observer" we are met by the magic word Tensors. The editors have presumably not noticed that after thus whetting our curiosity about this mysterious cosmic mantram, "the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated," the Britannica, though not elsewhere afraid of technicalities, leaves us in the lurch: for Professor Eddington, who likewise contracts a tensor just at this point (III-908a), also contracts his exegetic antennæ.

The Britannica has always featured the Population problem and Malthus himself adorned the supplement to the fifth Edition. But it is too little known that Malthus was a clergyman and a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. Consequently it is a new departure to be informed that Dr. Marie Stopes's "exhaustive treatise has been largely used by doctors and medical students." The Rev. Sir James Marchant is further inspired by his subject, Birth Control, to quote: