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of LITERATURE

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Humanizing Knowledge

"THE sovereignty of man lieth hid in knowledge," said Francis Bacon; and again "a man is but what he knoweth." Truths so accepted that they are truisms, and yet truths more frequently honored in the generalization than in the practice. For of all the great generality of mankind how large a proportion pursues knowledge with the ardor that it hunts pleasure or follows business? We have Aristotle's authority for it that all men naturally desire to know, yet the curiosity that is common to all men is in only the few more than a feeble flicker of interest, as quick to be extinguished as to be aroused. It is matter of general observation how passively most of humanity accepts its world, as though it were not at all wonderful that the moon should draw the sea or night follow day. Most people are aware of the mystery of the universe only in fitful flashes, and are content to accept its manifestations with little inquiry or none.

Yet that the science and the history of the world can be made fascinating to the multitude the record of some of the recent works that attempt to set forth their development has proved beyond a doubt. It is not that man cannot be drawn to knowledge but that so rarely is knowledge presented in a form to stir his latent enthusiasm. Long the possession of the pundits alone, even its language has tended to become obscure for the masses, and its stretches therefore arid to their intelligence. It is in recognition of these facts that there has recently been established a prize that seems to us worthy of note both for what it connotes and for what it may portend. The substantial award offered by the publishers Simon & Schuster, in conjunction with the *Forum Magazine*, to be known as the Francis Bacon Award for the Humanization of Knowledge, may, in their words, be "given for a book in any and every department of knowledge, including music, literature, history, art, biography, and all sciences." The jury that is to sit in judgment on the manuscripts submitted is composed of men who, like Will Durant and Hendrik Willem Van Loon, have themselves produced volumes that fall within the range of the award. Back of them is to be a body of scientific advisers chosen from among scholars of recognized authoritativeness. Thus one body of men may be deemed certain to lay stress on the presentation of knowledge in such a fashion as to insure its popular acceptance and the other to insist that even more important than brilliance is accuracy.

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Such a system of checks and balances seems to us absolutely essential to any large scheme for the humanization of knowledge. For it still remains true that a "little learning is a dangerous thing," dangerous to the recipient and in the giver. To disseminate half truths may produce worse results than to leave ignorance complete. For the man who knows that he knows not may at least have the grace to refrain from acting or theorizing on what is without his scope, but the man who knows not and thinks that he knows, may do incalculable harm by his interventions. To assemble a body of facts as nearly error-proof as possible and to issue warning as to the possibility of error—that is the first duty of the scientist (we use scientist in its precise meaning of "one who knows" no matter what his field); to present these facts so that they shall be at once lucid, interesting, and in no way misleading to the general public—that is the function of the popularizer of knowledge. If by some happy chance the

The Organ Blower

By LEONARD FEENEY

THAT Mary, the Mother
Of Jesus, may
Have a lovely hymn
On her festive day:—

That God almighty
May be adored
With tuneful treble
And bass and chord:—

That music may mingle
With light and flower,
On the hot June nights
At the Holy Hour:—

Humphry, the loon,
By the dusty rafter
Sweats like an ox,
And he says "I haf ter
Buy new galluses
The mornin' after."

This Week



"Administrative Justice and the Supremacy of the Law in the United States." Reviewed by *Edward Bruce Hill*.

"Emerson and Others." Reviewed by *John Macy*.

"Good Theatre." Reviewed by *Mary Cass Canfield*.

"Fear." Reviewed by *George M. Parker, M.D.*

"Circus Parade." Reviewed by *Allan Nevins*.

"Meanwhile." Reviewed by *Lee Wilson Dodd*.

"The Love Child." Reviewed by *Amy Loveman*.

"Kingsley Fairbridge." Reviewed by *Frank Parker Day*.

Next Week, or Later

Emotion and Intellect in Poetry. By *John Gould Fletcher*.

scientist—as did Huxley—has eloquence at his command as well as scholarship then indeed is knowledge fortunate in its interpreter.

But how infrequently does a Huxley arise! How far more often does the man immersed in facts lose sight of the difficulty those facts have for the layman to whom even the A B C's of his science are unknown. It is again and again the writer who would never for a moment pretend to great scholarship who can best arouse the many to a realization of the beauty and fertility of knowledge, who can lead them to love knowledge, to seek knowledge, and to profit by knowledge. That is why that we think this award named in honor of the man who took "all knowledge as his field" and based upon a just appreciation of the necessity of making knowledge palatable in order to make it available to the masses, is of moment.

A Briton on the Rampage*

By MICHAEL SADLEIR

Author of "Anthony Trollope"

THE tale of Frances Trollope and the curious circumstances which led to the writing and notoriety of "Domestic Manners of the Americans" have precisely those qualities of piquancy and paradox most agreeable to the malice of posterity.

Nearly one hundred years ago—on November 4, 1827—an English lady in early middle age, charged with the fantastic duty of preparing for the establishment of a department store in Cincinnati, was despatched by her eccentric husband from Harrow Weald to the middle-west of America. She took with her three small children and a certain amount of ready money. After three years the money was spent; the store, before even its building was complete, had come to bankruptcy; and one of the children had fallen so ill that he had perforce to be sent home to England. The distracted mother and her remaining offspring were left stranded in America, to live in abject poverty and to become ever more unfavorably impressed with their surroundings.

At this crisis of her fortunes, and with a faint hope of earning a few pounds on her ultimate return to England, the forlorn and harassed lady began to jot down her impressions of the United States, to tell the tale of her adventures. It was a desperate experiment in book-making, and should, by all the canons of literary suitability, have failed rather than triumphed. But Frances Trollope's luck had changed at last. By the middle of 1832 her jottings had been published under the title "Domestic Manners of the Americans;" and she herself—having turned author from compulsion and not at all from inclination or from belief in her own talents—had become the scandal or the heroine of two hemispheres.

In the queer hazard that led to her choice of theme lies at once the cause and the irony of Mrs. Trollope's leap to world-wide reputation. No one could have been more innocent of deliberate sensationalism. She wrote about America, because America was the only subject she was capable of treating; she wrote with bitterness, because her own experiences had been bitter. And yet, because at the moment of her writing the United States and their republican experiment were among the most topical and provocative questions of the day, her book and its virulence set two nationalisms at loggerheads and almost caused an Anglo-American "incident." And the second stage of this involuntary imbroglio was, so far as it concerned Mrs. Trollope, no less strange and contradictory. She had no sooner grown accustomed to the indignation of America over her book than she encountered an equally bitter hostility among her own compatriots. This hostility grew into a vendetta. Of the English enemies of Frances Trollope the nucleus were serious persons of radical tendency, holding America for sacrosanct and her loud democratic vauntings for the battle-cry of liberty, and the later recruits indignant representatives of the vested interests, roused by her propaganda novels against child-labor in factories and other cruelties. All turned fiercely on the bustling, ordinary little woman who had dared to trespass on their idealism and their profits. From the moment of her first book's publication to the end of her prolific writing life this motley company pursued her with

*The following essay constitutes the major part of Mr. Sadleir's introduction to the reissue of Frances Trollope's "Domestic Manners of the Americans" to be published by Dodd, Mead & Company on August 26.

calumny and declared her a monster of dishonest prejudice and coarse ill-breeding. So it came to pass that Frances Trollope, whose chief accusation against the Americans had been that they lacked the refinement and elegance of Londoners, came herself to be vilified for an indelicacy most unfeminine, most unladylike, and most un-English.

Modern opinion will find little cause for fury in the pages of "Domestic Manners of the Americans." Not only have many of Mrs. Trollope's criticisms the staleness to which only out-of-date caricature can achieve, but her very enthusiasms tend to prejudice the self-conscious twentieth-century mind against those qualities of American enterprise and landscape that she was most concerned to praise. When, however, into the strained atmosphere of the early thirties these two volumes of tart fault-finding and rather superior approval blundered noisily, there was immediate explosion. At home the pro-American Radicals cried out against the hide-bound prejudice of snobbery, whilst Jingo-Conservatives cheered Mrs. Trollope to the echo, fêted and flattered her, made of her Yankee slang a nine days' chic. In America, every journalist and politician howled execration at the latest and most unashamed example of the patronizing Briton on the overseas rampage. It cannot be denied that much of Mrs. Trollope's offense lay in her truthfulness. The middle-west in those early days was (and one must needs judge it on all available evidence from "Martin Chuzzlewit" downwards) of a crudity, a tedium, and a boastful squalor inevitable to a certain stage of national development. As certain strata of society in England seemed to the cultivated French during the last half of the eighteenth century, so did the scenes witnessed by Mrs. Trollope during the first part of her sojourn in America appear to one brought up in the London of the eighteen-twenties. She has been blamed for generalizing on the basis of a very limited experience; but careful reading of her book will exonerate her from this charge. She is careful to disclaim any knowledge beyond the radius of her actual journeyings, and her record contains passages of generous compliment once she reaches Baltimore and New York. But to the contemporary American reader the whole body of her praise was as nothing beside her criticism of manners, her exposure of male selfishness and greed, her taunt at American provincialism and false prudery, and her vivid descriptions of crude religious mania and revivalist hysteria. The anger of the United States gave such pleasure to those English folk who were of anti-American temper, that a pamphlet was printed of extracts from American reviews of "Domestic Manners." But these extracts—selected deliberately to gratify a quarrelsome English nationalism—are less interesting than a more spontaneous and more amusing comment affixed by a so-called "American editor" to a pirated edition of the book, which, of course, was immediately issued in New York. This editorial comment is the more pointed (although unconsciously so) because of the great services which were actually rendered to Mrs. Trollope in her inexperienced dealings with publishers and public by Captain Basil Hall, a naval officer who had already given deep offence to Americans by a book about their country.* Here are some characteristic paragraphs from the American preface:

I have satisfied myself (writes the American Editor), of the impossibility of this book being the production of an English lady. I think it quite impossible that an English lady should condescend to become a spy into the domestic habits and economy of the females of any country, with the views to expressing them to the world. . . . An English lady would scarcely descend to that singular minutiae of painting in which our author so frequently indulges herself. I allude to the stories of the "bugs," the curious description and innuendoes of the camp-meeting scene; the episode of the amorous parson; the dialogue between Miss Clarissa and Mr. Smith, illustrated so happily by the accompanying plate, and above all the representation of the scene at the theatre and the young lady half-dressed at her toilet. . . .

No lady, I will venture to say, of any nation would stand godmother to a book embellished with such illustrations as accompany "Domestic Manners of the Americans." . . .

To complete the proofs which this work everywhere exhibits of the utter impossibility of its being written by an English lady, I shall merely advert generally to the entire absence of all the characteristics of female writing which it exhibits. There is a total want of delicacy in style and sentiment; a coarse disregard of all those nice decorums which are sacred in the eyes of a well-bred lady; a flippant ignorance of genteel life; and above all a daring, reckless meddling with scenes and topics, which we

hope, for the honour of old England, precludes the possibility of any English lady having the least agency in its production. . . .

I set industriously about ascertaining the real author. In this pursuit I have been eminently successful. I have ascertained beyond all reasonable doubt that the real author is no less a person than Captain Basil Hall, or 'All, as he is called in the literary circles of London, where he moves with such distinction. . . .

If there really are two such distinct individuals as Captain 'All and Mrs. Trollope, I congratulate the English nation on possessing another pair of Siamese twins.

Some persons, of no contemptible sagacity, have hinted to me the possibility of Captain 'All being Mrs. Trollope, instead of Mrs. Trollope being Captain 'All. The idea is feasible, and deserves a passing examination, although the result is of little or no consequence to us; for whether the captain is Mrs. Trollope, or Mrs. Trollope the captain, concerns only the English ladies, who will doubtless be grateful to me for attempting this vindication of their manners and character. That they are one and the same is certain, but I confess there is some difficulty in ascertaining the sex of these twin gossips. When I listen to the garrulous foppiness of the captain, I feel irresistibly inclined to pronounce him to be Mrs. Trollope, or some such ugly old woman in the disguise of a man; but when I ponder over the coarse delineations, the indelicate allusions, and bug and spitting stories of Mrs. Trollope, I am as irresistibly drawn in the conviction that it is some conceited ignorant Jack Tar, breaking his fore-castle jests, with a quid of tobacco in his mouth, and his canvas hat knowingly adjusted on one side of his head. Thus am I again brought back to the region of doubt, and thus am I obliged to leave the subject to the industry of some future inquirer. Enough I trust, however, hath been said to prove, to the satisfaction of every impartial reader, either Captain Basil 'All is Mrs. Trollope in breeches, or that Mrs. Trollope is Captain Basil 'All in petticoats.

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"Domestic Manners" earned for its author some six hundred pounds and a notoriety of a very piebald kind. She was herself more interested in the money than in the reputation. The family finances were in chaos, and although her first lucky venture relieved the immediate pressure, there was much more of earning to be done before she could have leisure even to think herself a literary lion. And when the leisure came, it brought no thought of vanity. By the time that money had been won, she was too old, too weary, and too indifferent to anything but peace to care whether her name in the annals of contemporary letters was bright or mud-bespattered. But to posterity—to such part of it, at least, as plays the amateur of irony and savors the quaint fevers of the past—the perpetual quality of irritation that her book possessed (how faded are now the great majority! what slapstick geniality seems even her most enduring satire!) provides an intriguing problem in changing standards of literary taste. Mrs. Trollope's long list of novels includes some twenty tales of fashionable life, rich in sensibility, painfully genteel, occasionally amusing, always rapidly observed; four stories of America—among them the moving anti-slave-trade novel "Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw" (1836) and the still excellent fooling of "The Barnabys in America" (1843); a savage satire on evangelical Christianity—"The Vicar of Wrexhill" (1837); an exposure of Jesuit intrigues in England—"Father Eustace" (1847); and two books as frankly propagandist as ever Dickens himself wrote—"Michael Armstrong" (1840), a fierce attack on child slavery in north-country mills, and "Jessie Phillips" (1843), an appeal for public protest against the administration of the New Poor Law. Thus summarized, the bulk of her fiction sounds commendable and praiseworthy enough; to read, the books are pleasant where they are not dull. And yet in the opinion of her contemporaries Frances Trollope was so violent, so unscrupulous, above all so vulgar, that even to read her was more daring than genteel.

How might this be? The explanation is little creditable to the England of the thirties and forties. Those persons who were angered by her anti-Americanism or by her assaults on their freedom to wring wealth from helplessness chose, as means of revenge, an intense though indirect campaign against her breeding and her sense of decency. That their disingenuous intrigue should so thoroughly have succeeded can only be attributed to the snobbery of their compatriots and to a prevalent desire to shirk unpleasant facts. For indeed, save by the prejudice of snobbery and by false refinement, the wide-spread shudder at the gross nature of her books cannot be interpreted. Her non-British acquaintances did not find her vulgar. She was one of the privileged few invited to hear Chateaubriand read his memoirs aloud at Madame Récamier's; while in Vienna she became an intimate friend of Mme. Metternich. But in her own country the respectable drew in

their skirts. Thus, for example, a contributor to R. H. Horne's critical symposium, "A New Spirit of the Age," who is at once sensitive to outrages against elegance and highly conscious of the fact that Mrs. Gore was of the *beau monde* but Mrs. Trollope of the middle class:

If we want a complete contrast to Mrs. Gore, we have it at hand in Mrs. Trollope. The class to which she belongs is, fortunately, very small; but it will always be recruited from the ranks of the unscrupulous so long as a corrupt taste is likely to yield a trifling profit. She owes everything to that audacious contempt of public opinion, which is the distinguishing mark of persons who are said to stick at nothing. Her constitutional coarseness is the natural element of a low popularity, and is sure to pass for cleverness, shrewdness, and strength, where cultivated judgment and chaste inspiration would be thrown away. She takes a strange delight in the hideous and revolting, and dwells with gusto upon the sins of vulgarity. Nothing can exceed the vulgarity of Mrs. Trollope's mob of characters, except the vulgarity of her select aristocracy.

The suggestion that this vulgarity was as much profit-seeking as self-expression was first made by Fenimore Cooper in his book on England. But he had, at least, the provocation of "Domestic Manners," which Horne's contributor had not; nor Mary Mitford either, who, for all her long-standing intimacy with the Trollopes and her many protestations of friendship, could yet allow herself this little genteel sneer:

I really cannot read the present race of novel-writers, although my old friend Mrs. Trollope, in spite of her terrible coarseness, has done two or three marvellously clever things. She was brought up within three miles of this house and is, in spite of her works, a most elegant and agreeable woman.

So the tale went, from mouth to cultivated mouth, parroted from one decade to another; thus the irony that attended the reception of "Domestic Manners" persisted throughout Mrs. Trollope's life and even after it. She wrote her books from bleak necessity; she ground out library-fiction to buy her children food, to pay her doctor's bills. As theme for bread-and-butter novel-writing, any experience, absurdity, or abuse, was welcome. Americans, evangelicals, mill-owners, old maids, parvenu vulgarians—all of these were to her hurried, anxious mind subjects as good as each or any other. Nothing she said of them was bitterly or even very deeply meant; but much of it was taken with a tragic indignation.

Her first encounters with such unlooked-for hostility left her bewildered and a little breathless. But time and her temperament accustomed her to the experience. A cheerful, unreflective creature, she was one to whom livelihood was more precious than vain speculation, and pretty clothes more lovely than idealism. Wherefore she rattled through her strenuous life, only concerned to keep her family in food and shelter, at once incurious and uncomprehending when the world cried out against her methods of bread-winning.

One may indeed liken her to a flustered and perhaps incautious starling who, home-seeking, builds a nest in a mansion-chimney. The nest and chimney take fire; the mansion is burnt and with it an important will; there follow family and legal complications of an alarming kind. But, were the starling to be charged with the responsibility for all these dreadful things, she would not understand her sin nor let it worry her. "I had to build a nest," she would protest. "That chimney seemed as good a place as any other."

The craze for autograph collecting has reached such irrational proportions that we take pleasure in reprinting a letter once written by a much-badgered novelist in reply to an intrusive request:

"Dear Sir: I feel sure you will not misunderstand a well-meaning but much occupied man's point-of-view when I say that miscellaneous requests for autographs rapidly become a dangerous persecution for an author's life. Autographing a book should be, if one's hand retains any primitive honesty, an intimate and personal matter; the haphazard inscribing which is forced upon authors is (in the eyes of God) a degradation in both parties. When there are personal affinities and affections involved you will find any reasonable man proud and eager to sign his name; otherwise, if he is worth your having thought of twice, you will not ask nor he consent. At any rate not without a secret infernal pang. I pay you the compliment, very rare indeed, of speaking candidly."

In our scrapbook the name of the writer of this letter has somehow got lost. Can any reader identify it? It sounds rather like Robert Louis Stevenson.

*"Travels in North America," by Basil Hall. London.