

# The Saturday Review

## of LITERATURE

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### Mr. Pickwick and Others

EVERY so often in the midst of our conviction that a new order has set in dislodging the gods of the past we are brought sharply to rights by some incident proving those gods to be potent as of old. Take Dickens, for instance. Our wiseacres have been telling us this past decade or two that he is outmoded; that his characters are puppets, his sentiment bathos, and the taste for him a laughable Victorianism. Then along comes the hundredth anniversary of that ride that was never made by Mr. Pickwick and his friends from the Golden Cross to Rochester and sober Englishmen fit out a coach, man it with masqueraders, and reverently repeat the famous journey. That is the true immortality—never to have had substantiality but still to have so much reality that a pious pilgrimage commemorates your non-existence! We wonder which of the personalities which our teeming literature of recent years has produced will so establish itself in the affections of the public as to draw forth memorial ceremonies when its centenary arrives. And we dare hazard the guess that so long as fiction concerns itself more with states of mind and emotion than with conduct we may continue to get from it admirable psychographs but hardly figures to be loved and cherished.

But, it might be asked, is not conduct the product of states of mind and emotion shaped to a definite course by deliberate choice? And when you have analyzed the stream of consciousness and depicted impulse translated into action, have you not, as our present-day delineator of character would maintain, portrayed the essential man, and should you not, according to formula, have produced a figure instinct with life? The fact is, you haven't. And you haven't because men and women as they appear to their associates are not the sum of mental states, or mental states plus emotional reactions, but of attitudes of mind and compulsions of feeling playing through, but often concealed, by little mannerisms, tricks of speech, fashions of deportment, buttresses of habit and convention—small externalities that differentiate even while they standardize persons.

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Dickens knew this, and he lifted Mr. Pickwick, and Mr. Micawber, and Uriah Heep, and Mr. Veneering, and a score of other characters to immortality by identifying them with certain traits and thereby investing them with a lifelikeness that no mere psychological analysis could ever have produced. Perhaps he caricatured humanity—we will grant that to his detractors—but only in the sense that he made the individual the norm rather than the actuality. Dickens characters may not exist, but nevertheless they are real, more real than the reality. As a writer in a recent issue of the *Manchester Guardian* says: "Thackeray's characters are men you meet every day, but Dickens's characters are men you want to meet every day, and, alas! never do. Thackeray's Londoners are mortal, but Dickens's are immortal." They are the types to which we refer the flesh and blood persons of our acquaintance and they take their place in the thought and speech of the literate world not as creatures of the imagination but as familiar acquaintances.

More and more has character been becoming a passive agency in the hands of the novelists. It is a thing to be dissected, to be exposed through the minute exploration of the inhibitions and impulses of the subject, not a thing to reveal itself in idiosyncrasy of speech and action. Yet character

### Duality

By KENNETH SLADE ALLING

THE facets of the flesh require  
For their reflections outward fire.

But all unfaceted the soul  
Shines from an inner aureole.

They are dissimilar, these jewels,  
Lighted by flames from different fuels,

As equally dissimilar  
As is the planet and the star.

But stars and planets light the face  
Of all the universe of space.

And the dim universe of me  
Needs likewise its duality.

### This Week



When Debts Are Politics. By *James W. Angell*

"The Prodigious Lover." Reviewed by *Randall Thompson*

"The Letters of George Gissing." Reviewed by *William McFee*

"Trumpets of Jubilee," and "A Methodist Saint." Reviewed by *John Bakeless*

"Wild Orchard." Reviewed by *Grace Frank*

"Alma." Reviewed by *Zona Gale*

"Giants in the Earth." Reviewed by *Allan Nevins*

"Mysteries." Reviewed by *Allen W. Porterfield*

"Runaway Days." Reviewed by *Herbert Ravenel Sass*

Granules from an Hour-Glass. By *Christopher Morley*

### Next Week, or Later

"The American Secretaries of State." Reviewed by *John Corbin*

of all things is least capable of categorical representation, for of all things it is most constantly in process of modification. What remains fixed to it are certain predominant qualities—the qualities that Dickens seized upon and in seizing upon produced certain types recognizably true. He was nearer the truth when he presented his figures as the embodiments of these qualities—no matter how he exaggerated the extent to which they predominated in any individual—than are those authors who, probing more deeply, become so mazed in the complexities of their heroes' thoughts and motives as to present personality as a procession of states of mind and feeling instead of as an amalgam of them given distinctiveness by certain predominant traits and mannerisms that set the stamp of individuality.

### Invocation\*

By STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

AMERICAN muse, whose strong and diverse  
heart

So many men have tried to understand  
But only made it smaller with their art,  
Because you are as various as your land,

As mountainous-deep, as flowered with blue rivers,  
Thirsty with deserts, buried under snows,  
As native as the shape of Navajo quivers,  
And native, too, as the sea-voyaged rose.

Swift runner, never captured or subdued,  
Seven-branched elk beside the mountain stream,  
That half a hundred hunters have pursued  
But never matched their bullets with the dream,

Where the great huntsmen failed, I set my sorry  
And mortal snare for your immortal quarry.

You are the buffalo-ghost, the broncho-ghost  
With dollar-silver in your saddle-horn,  
The cowboys riding in from Painted Post,  
The Indian arrow in the Indian corn,

And you are the clipped velvet of the lawns  
Where Shropshire grows from Massachusetts sods,  
The grey Maine rocks—and the war-painted dawns  
That break above the Garden of the Gods.

The prairie-schooners crawling toward the ore  
And the cheap car, parked by the station-door.

Where the skyscrapers lift their foggy plumes  
Of stranded smoke out of a stony mouth  
You are that high stone and its arrogant fumes,  
And you are ruined gardens in the South

And bleak New England farms, so winter-white  
Even their roofs look lonely, and the deep  
The middle grainland where the wind of night  
Is like all blind earth sighing in her sleep.

A friend, an enemy, a sacred hag  
With two tied oceans in her medicine-bag.

They tried to fit you with an English song  
And clip your speech into the English tale.  
But, even from the first, the words went wrong,  
The catbird pecked away the nightingale.

The homesick men begot high-cheekboned things  
Whose wit was whittled with a different sound  
And Thames and all the rivers of the kings  
Ran into Mississippi and were drowned.

They planted England with a stubborn trust.  
But the cleft dust was never English dust.

Stepchild of every exile from content  
And all the disavouched, hard-bitten pack  
Shipped overseas to steal a continent  
With neither shirts nor honor to their back.

Pimping grandee and rump-faced regicide,  
Apple-cheeked youngers from a windmill-square,  
Puritans stubborn as the nails of Pride,  
Rakes from Versailles and thieves from County  
Clare,

\*This poem is the introduction to the third book of "John Brown's Body," an epic on which Mr. Benét is at present at work.

The black-robed priests who broke their hearts in  
vain  
To make you God and France or God and Spain.

These were your lovers in your buckskin-youth,  
And each one married with a dream so proud  
He never knew it could not be the truth  
And that he coupled with a girl of cloud.

And now to see you is more difficult yet  
Except as an immensity of wheel  
Made up of wheels, oiled with inhuman sweat  
And glittering with the heat of ladled steel.

All these you are, and each is partly you,  
And none is false, and none is wholly true.

So how to see you as you really are,  
So how to suck the pure, distillate, stored  
Essence of essence from the hidden star  
And make it pierce like a riposting sword.

For, as we hunt you down, you must escape  
And we pursue a shadow of our own  
That can be caught in a magician's cape  
But has the flatness of a painted stone.

Never the running stag, the gull at wing,  
The pure elixir, the American thing.

And yet, at moments when the mind was hot  
With something fierier than joy or grief,  
When each known spot was an eternal spot  
And every leaf was an immortal leaf,

I think that I have seen you, not as one,  
But clad in diverse semblances and powers,  
Always the same, as light falls from the sun,  
And always different, as the differing hours.

Yet, through each altered garment that you wore,  
The naked body, shaking the heart's core.

All day the snow fell on that Eastern town  
With its soft, pelting, little, endless sigh  
Of infinite flakes that brought the tall sky down  
Till I could put my hands in the white sky

And taste cold scraps of heaven on my tongue  
And walk in such a changed and luminous light  
As gods inhabit when the gods are young.  
All day it fell. And when the gathered night

Was a blue shadow cast by a pale glow  
I saw you then, snow-image, bird of the snow.

And I have seen and heard you in the dry  
Close-huddled furnace of the city street  
When the parched moon was planted in the sky  
And the limp air hung dead against the heat.

I saw you rise, red as that rusty plant,  
Dizzied with lights, half-mad with senseless sound,  
Enormous metal, shaking to the chant  
Of a triphammer striking iron ground.

Enormous power, ugly to the fool,  
And beautiful as a well-handled tool.

These, and the memory of that windy day  
On the bare hills, beyond the last barbed wire,  
When all the orange poppies bloomed one way  
As if a breath would blow them into fire,

I keep forever, like the sea-lion's tusk  
The broken sailor brings away to land,  
But when he touches it, he smells the musk,  
And the whole sea lies hollow in his hand.

So, from a hundred visions, I make one,  
And out of darkness build my mocking sun.

And should that task seem fruitless in the eyes  
Of those a different magic sets apart  
To see through the ice-crystal of the wise  
No nations but the nation that is Art,

Their words are just. But when the birchbark-call  
Is shaken with the sound that hunters make  
The moose comes plunging through the forest-wall  
Although the rifle waits beside the lake.

Art has no nations—but the mortal sky  
Lingers like gold in immortality.

This flesh was seeded from no foreign grain  
But Pennsylvania and Kentucky wheat,  
And it has soaked in California rain  
And five years tempered in New England sleet

To strive at last, against an alien proof  
And by the changes of an alien moon,  
To build again that blue, American roof  
Over a half-forgotten battle-tune,

And call unsurely, from a haunted ground,  
Armies of shadows, and the shadow-sound.

In your Long House there is an attic-place  
Full of dead epics and machines that rust,  
And there, occasionally, with casual face,  
You come awhile to stir the sleepy dust,

Neither in pride nor mercy, but in vast  
Indifference at so many gifts unsought,  
The yellowed satins, smelling of the past,  
And all the loot the lucky pirates brought.

I only bring a cup of silver air.  
Yet, in your casualness, receive it there.

Receive the dream too haughty for the breast,  
Receive the words that should have walked as bold  
As the storm walks along the mountain-crest  
And are like beggars whining in the cold.

The maimed presumption, the unskilful skill,  
The patchwork colors, fading from the first,  
And all the fire that fretted at the will  
With such a barren ecstasy of thirst.

Receive them all—and should you choose to touch  
them  
With one slant ray of quick, American light,  
Even the dust will have no power to smutch them,  
Even the worst will glitter in the night.

If not—the dry bones littered by the way  
May still point giants toward their golden prey.

## When Debts are Politics\*

By JAMES W. ANGELL  
Columbia University

NO international question of the present day has been more widely discussed than the war debts and their settlement, and no question is more important. At a time when political and economic stability is at last being restored throughout the world, and when a new spirit of international trust and coöperation has at last begun to yield visible fruits, the debt question still constitutes one of the great remaining sore spots in Europe, and perhaps one of the great danger spots. Especially with respect to the debts due the American government, an extraordinary bitterness of feeling has developed on both sides of the Atlantic. The real facts and the real issues have become so badly obscured and distorted in the resulting controversy, and the maintenance of equitable international relationships is so vital a concern to every country, that it is eminently worth while to examine the elements in the situation with some care. Certain facts are beyond dispute; others are not. The justly-minded citizen must form his own opinion, and appraise the actions of his government accordingly.

The great bulk of the inter-governmental debts had their origin in the war-time requirements of the European Allies for manufactures and raw materials, needed directly in the war itself or for the support of the civilian populations. The Continental Allies mobilized so large a part of their peoples, that the remainder literally could not produce enough munitions for the troops. They had to secure the balance from England, and later from the United States. Similarly both the Continental Allies, and even England herself, lacked many foodstuffs and essential raw materials, and had to turn to the United States for them. To pay for these purchases, supplies of sterling and of dollars far in excess of anything that could be secured in the exchange markets were necessary. The only way of getting such supplies in adequate volume was the floating of loans in England and in the United States; and as a practical matter that

\*World War Debt Settlements. By Harold Glenn Moulton and Leo Pasvolsky. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1927. \$2.

Italy's International Economic Situation. By Constance McGuire. The same.

meant primarily borrowing *between governments*. Open-market borrowing here, for example, and the return of American securities held abroad, accounted for less than fifteen per cent of the Allied expenditures in the United States. In that situation, in the catastrophic emergency of war and war finance, lies the origin of over ninety per cent of the inter-governmental debts. The remainder is accounted for chiefly by loans for relief and reconstruction made after the Armistice.

At the time of the Armistice the gross total of the inter-governmental debts had reached a sum in excess of twenty-one billion dollars. Every country involved, except the United States, was a debtor; but because of the interchange of operations and accounts many were also creditors. England and the United States, however, were the only nations with a *net excess of credits*. By 1923, when the first important negotiations for a settlement of the debts began, the gross total of the debts had risen to twenty-eight billions. Apart from the relatively small relief loans, this huge increase *after* the cessation of hostilities was due chiefly to the accumulation of unpaid interest charges. The United States was owed eleven billions, and England three and three quarters billions net. France was in debt three and a half billions net; Italy four billions, and Russia four and a half billions.

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Thus by 1923 the United States was very much the largest creditor in the inter-governmental account, and it is around our action in dealing with the debts that most of the recent controversy has centered. Eleven billion dollars, of which all but eight per cent arose directly from the war-time needs of the Allies, was owed to us by seventeen countries. At the present time settlements have been made with twelve of these countries, while the Mellon-Bérenger agreement with France is still pending. The remaining unsettled debts are of relatively slight importance, and as far as action by the American government goes it is substantially correct to say that the first phase of the debt question is closed. Both the terms of the various settlements themselves, however, and even the fact that any settlement at all was required, have given rise to bitter criticism and protest on the part of the debtors. As things worked out, the American government now appears to have followed a perhaps opportunistic compromise policy, making concessions far greater than some of the debtors will admit, but far smaller than they regard as just. What has this policy been?

The loans granted to the Allies for military purposes were made under authority of certain clauses in the Liberty and Victory Loan Acts. The language of those Acts was quite unmistakable. They provided that the obligations purchased by our government from foreign governments—remember that these were all *inter-governmental* operations—should bear the same rate of interest, and carry the same general terms, as the corresponding obligations of the United States issued to provide the necessary funds. If this provision had been carried out, the debts would now bear from four to five per cent interest, and would be amortized in full over the next ten to thirty years. The War Debt Funding Act of 1922 similarly stressed the repayment in full of the principal of the debts. It authorized a reduction of the interest charges to four and a quarter per cent; but in most other respects paralleled the stipulations of the Liberty Loan Acts, except for a passing reference to discretionary justice.

When the time came for making actual funding agreements, however, in 1923 and subsequent years, the Debt Funding Commission proceeded on a different and more moderate basis. It has admittedly secured the repayment of the principal of all the loans, if the principal be regarded simply as a certain number of dollars. But it has reduced the interest charges in all cases, and has spread out the amortizations over sixty-two years. This action has produced terms very different from the terms of the present national debt of the United States. Including the unratified agreement with France, the total principal of the debt as funded is eleven and a half billion dollars. This is substantially equal to the *principal of the debts as originally contracted*, plus accumulated interest. But it is only the *nominal* principal. The interest payments are so cut down, and the period of amortization is so lengthened, that the effective or *real* principal, calculated on a business basis, is very much smaller than this. At an interest rate of four and a