

the channels of random conversation Nagel leaps into the sea and "some bubbles came up." That is the "plot" in full detail.

Two-thirds of the way through the book Dagny becomes positively vexed. She wants Nagel to speak out. He does, but only to assert that all is humbug. He did not wholly believe this; nor does Hamsun believe it. But Hamsun began in 1887 to pry into the meaning of life; and though he has hurled the slangish exclamation at civilization and progress on many occasions, he has never been able to answer the question, "What is it all about?" In view of what Hamsun has written in quite recent years—he will soon be seventy—it is reassuring to believe this much: Hamsun feels that while it may be thrilling and ennobling to search for the Holy Grail it benumbs and debases to fancy that you have got it and to determine to keep it—for yourself.

The work abounds in ingenious humor, delicious irony, and subtle bits of the wisdom that enriches living. Mr. Chater's translation is distinguished, except for a few Norwegianisms which, it seems now, he is destined never to be able to overcome: "He made as though to jump overboard." The original sticks out through that like a stoker's head through a water-line port-hole on arrival in a strange harbor. Why not, "He acted as though he were going to jump overboard"?

Beyond the Cities

RUNAWAY DAYS. By SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1927.
\$2.50.

Reviewed by HERBERT RAVENEL SASS
Author of "Adventures in Green Places"

SAMUEL SCOVILLE believes that in places green and wild, beyond the boundaries of cities and the smell of factory smoke, there is a magic which will keep a man from growing old. There must be virtue in this theory, for Mr. Scoville grows younger with every book that he writes. Here in "Runaway Days" are the most exuberant chapters that he has yet given us.

These chapters are not animal stories, as in "Man and Beast," the thrilling book of wilderness drama which he brought out last fall. There are fewer thrills in "Runaway Days" for the lover of headlong action, of bloody combats, and hair-breadth escapes. Here we shall find recorded the everyday adventures of an observer of wild nature as he roams over the countryside with eyes that see and ears that hear and a mind attuned to the varied moods of the mother of birds and trees and grass and mountains.

As the sky brightened there stretched out before me a new world—silent, mystical, wondrous, such as the angels of God might have seen at the dawn of the seventh day, whose tender, shy beauty was overhung by a turquoise sky. For a moment the beautiful earth smiled up at the shining sky; then over the rim of the world appeared the flame-gold of the sun.

Others have written more elaborately of winter sunrises, but here with quick, sure strokes a vivid picture is given. Throughout the book these swift flashes of beauty recur; and, in all its chapters, the book is the work of a swift, active mind, of eyes quick to see and a brain delicately sensitive to impressions—as when, for instance, a bittern is encountered and the event is thus recorded:

Crawling carefully to the crest of the ridge, we saw an American bittern standing in the open pasture by the edge of the marsh and watched him gurgle out his thudding, bubbling, watery notes. Then he stooped and stepped stealthily like a little old bent man into the rushes.

"Like a little old bent man"—a page of description could not make the reader see that bittern so sharply.

In "Runaway Days" the reader will go with Mr. Scoville in search of a duck hawk's nest high on a cliff of the Palisades; he will spend a day in a tree-top and see the birds that came there between dawn and dusk; he will find the rare nest of Philohela the woodcock and of the great pileated woodpecker and many other nests that few men or women know; he will visit the bald eagle at home and the grim raven, and he will learn much about the ways of foxes, squirrels and other fourfoots of the eastern woods. And always the story of these adventurings is told exuberantly, with a lively humor brightening the telling of each tale, and, underlying it all, a keen sense of the beauty that is about us out of doors.

A delightful book, this record of Mr. Scoville's runaway days, at once informing and entertaining—a happy, intimate, friendly book, which deserves and will surely win a place in what for want of a better name we must call American nature-literature.

The BOWLING GREEN

Granules from an Hour-Glass

WHEN you see the great stride of the Camden Bridge, and look up at it from below, along the Philadelphia docks, you have already crossed it in your mind. That is the joy of bridges, crossing them before you come to them.

Bridges are well guarded: the Camden crossing has not only its uniformed toll officers, but also some mysterious Supervisor of the Yellows who keeps tab on taxies, to prevent Pennsylvania cabs from poaching on New Jersey; or perhaps vice versa.

Early in its difficult story society learned to guard bridges. All great crossings are watched and tariffed by prudential pontiffs, worldlywise or other-worldlywise. When men cross bridges they breathe a new air, have a sense of translation. Such men are dangerous. The state guards well its bridge-heads; for there are always a frantic few who, after crossing bridges, burn the pontiffs behind them.

In Harleigh Cemetery. When Walt took cover at last he did not rest on the earth, he burrowed into it. There is nothing Quakerish about that grave: it is pagan, palaeolithic. The massive cromlech tomb is dug into the hillside; it is piled together of huge unsmoothed granites. He was called a cave man, but he did not become so until he was dead. In an age of decorated urns and weeping marble angels he built this little stronghold in the forgiveness of earth—the earth of whom we ask so many questions; and who troubles us because she tells us so few lies.

Always tribal, he took his clan in with him. The niche you see plainest is, I think, his mother's. His own is almost behind the door. He left the door half open, and so it always stands. He can pass unquestioned out and in. I think he is more often out. So it is not really a tomb but a cenotaph. Perhaps every grave is. Every grave is an unknown soldier's.

Above that green hillside is some sort of stone-cutting workyard. "Here comes one among the well-beloved stonemasons," as he wrote once with perhaps a touch of that quaint Hicksite humor that it takes us so long to catch the slant of. Slabs of plain stone lie about under the trees. They are waiting for names.

Walt was called a loafer because he liked to watch others work. What they forgot was that his work was the kind that cannot be watched. No one except God ever watched a poet working.

His work has been called a shout, a yawp, an outcry, but inside all the ejaculations, promulgations, effusions, was a core of quiet. If you cut open any of his greater poems, to study the concentric grain and pattern, you will not only find a delicately wise artist, you will find at the center a germ of silence.

That he was a great terrene creator, casual, fecund, and sporadic like earth herself, is admitted by most; that he was a precise artist in detail is more often questioned. Yet even his catalogues, much reproached, are often marvels of cinematic portraiture and studio technique. And catalogues (bibliophiles know) may be works of cunning art. His epithets, his flash pictures of trades and persons, are magnesium flares. Magnesium not only produces sudden dazzling lights ("used in signalling," says the dictionary: oh glorious!) but is also "an antacid and cathartic."

"Once I passed through a populous city," he wrote, "imprinting my brain for future use." There indeed escaped the perfect self-description of the artist.

Sometimes, in moments of anger, disappointment, folly, futility, there seems something a little too easy in that cosmic meliorism of his—"the flag of his disposition, of hopeful green stuff woven." One thinks with a certain sympathy of his brother George who all his life, after puzzling over Walt's verses, kept asking him rather slyly "Walt, what's the game?"

I think of Walt as I mow the lawn. (*Lawn* is too smooth a word.) I observe that the stiff and coarse grassblade gets cut down, while the soft and supple grass bends over and escapes. This lures me into cheerful analogies. Then I reflect that it's all the same in the end, for the gardener goes back over the ground and gets the soft one with the shears.

When they put up a monument on Roosevelt Field, to mark the spot where Lindbergh took off, I hope they'll inscribe on it that line of Walt's—
Starting from Paumanok I fly like a bird.

Not only in Mr. Marquis's "Almost Perfect State" does the Bean find itself paired with high cosmological speculation. Mr. Marquis will be entertained to learn, from Professor J. L. Lowes's gorgeous volume "The Road to Xanadu," that in Coleridge's notebooks "The vision of an Epic on the Origin of Evil rubs elbows with the admission of a hankering for beans." In Mr. Marquis's fine rigmarole the Bean is the villain of the piece; with Coleridge, however, the Bean was viaticum and consolation.

So far I have only read the first chapter of "The Road to Xanadu," but I can say already that it is a work no one interested in the workings of poetic imagination will be content to miss. I don't think I shall ever forget the special thrill and shudder of excitement with which, on a night of spring lightning and freshet, I began Mr. Lowes's first chapter and realized what it was all about. That chapter alone, which introduces you to the Coleridge notebook, is charged with all the lightning and flicker of the mind's energy. It is one of the rare books that really tingle the spine; you tread on the actual vestiges of creation.

The annual list of grants made by the Guggenheim Foundation is always interesting, both in the choice of students, scientists and artists who are beneficiaries of these generous scholarships and in the subjects of research they pursue. But among this year's list there was one that gives me a special twinge of admiration—or some other kind of nostalgia—

"Dr. Odell Shepard, Professor of English, Trinity College, Hartford, for the preparation of a book to be entitled 'Romantic Solitude.'"

There is a book we shall await with eagerness.

"When I'm fond of a woman," he said, "I never can resist the temptation of telling her how beautiful she is."

(This man is doomed, I thought to myself; or else he has had singular good fortunes.)

"But surely," I said, "it can't always be untrue?"
"Toi, poisson lamentable!" he cried fiercely, mocking my simplicity. "If you tell them they're beautiful, by gemini they become so."

He insisted there was a whole rationale of aesthetic in this doctrine, and hankered to expound; but I left him and proceeded to lunch. My Plimsoll mark is painted rather low; one aphorism a day is capacity.

"Have you read 'Chekhov's Notebook'?"

"Rather! I think it's better than anything he ever published."

"But isn't everyone's? Haven't we all got in our notebooks things too beautiful, too humble, too comically true ever to trust them to print—"

"While we're alive, anyhow, and people can take us seriously."

Keep close to your green earth, she wrote. *There's strength in it.*

As soon as the letter was mailed she was furious. Liar, liar! she said to herself. There isn't strength in it, not for me. Nothing but torment. Is there strength in seeing a birch tree grow, a bird tutoring its young, a field of daisies going about its irrelevant business? There isn't strength anywhere except in poor absurd human beings, so comely and so comic. There's more strength in the shape of a hand than in all the cliffs of the Grand Canyon.

Then she went out and worked in the garden. From 4.59 to 5.17 (Eastern Standard Time) she was very happy; but I did not compel her to admit it.

"Here! What have you been having *my* thoughts for?"

"It's my business to have everybody's thoughts."

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

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Books of Special Interest

Franklin Likenesses

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN IN OIL AND BRONZE. By JOHN CLYDE OSWALD. New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1926.

Reviewed by JOHN HILL MORGAN

FIFTY years ago Robert C. Winthrop said: "Surely, if a man's fame is to be measured by the number of his portraits at home and abroad, Franklin was by far the most famous American of his period, as, indeed, there can be no doubt he was. His likeness is to be found in oil and crayon, on canvas, on paper, on ivory, on porcelain, and on pottery; and not only on pitchers and teacups, like Washington's, but presented on the least dignified or delicate utensils of household crockery."

In one of the infrequent but brilliant criticisms of the late Beverly Chew, he speaks of his disappointment in laying down a book because the title had led him to expect much more than an examination of the work disclosed, and "Benjamin Franklin in Oil and Bronze" suggests at once a number of pleasant possibilities, especially along the lines of an analysis of the many unsolved problems which exist in regard thereto, but apparently Mr. Oswald, purposely, has limited his scope so as to avoid the many pitfalls which such a treatment would require. The result has been to bring together in one handy volume many well known oil portraits of "the Father of all the Yankees," as Carlyle calls him, but it presents nothing that is new, unless the reproduction of a number of modern statues may be considered to add to the public's knowledge on the subject.

It is with regret that one notes the old libels reprinted as to the Franklin portrait belonging to Harvard University, which is classed as "of doubtful authenticity" and the painter "unknown." Again the ancient arguments against this portrait are restated, all of which were so completely answered in the scholarly article on the subject by the late Lawrence Park.

The trouble arose, it seems, because someone about 1840 added a brass plate to the frame of the Harvard portrait bearing, among other things, the words "London, 1726." It is obvious to any one who will analyze facts that in 1726, Franklin, twenty years old and a poor journeyman printer in London, living in an Italian warehouse on Duke Street "up three pair of stairs backwards" (for which he paid three shilling and six pence a week and shared his supper of an anchovy and a mug of ale with his landlady) was in no position even to buy the fine clothes in which he is depicted and much less to have his portrait painted. So the uncritical, who always prefer to believe a brass plate rather than use their eyes, reject the portrait.

Mr. Park pointed out that the face shown in the portrait was that of a man of forty and not of twenty, and that the costume required a date of about 1746 and not 1726. A study of the painting itself proved it to be by the Colonial painter, Robert Feke, born in Oyster Bay and buried no man knows where. Both this painter and Franklin were in Philadelphia in 1746 and Franklin, about to retire from the printing business, was well off. John Franklin, a prosperous tallow chandler of Boston, bequeathed this portrait in 1756 to his "well beloved wife" as "my Brother Benjamin Franklin's Picture," so we may take it that it was probably painted on order of John Franklin and it surely overshadows all except one or two in importance. It antedates by ten years the Pratt portrait which is listed in the present book as the earliest, following no doubt Hart's list of 1897. Since then, however, much water has gone over the dam.

Mr. Oswald's volume, in bringing together a number of reproductions of portraits attributed to Duplessis and others is of distinct value, as it would seem to dispose of the claim of one or two and shows the close resemblance between the Duplessis canvas and that of Joseph Wright. The question might well be asked why Greuze's pastel is not included. This portrait has an authentic history, being referred to as early as June 30, 1777, in Vol. 10 of the "Mémoires Secrets," was later sold in the Demidoff Sale, and is or was owned in Boston by Mrs. Thomas L. Winthrop. If the original is available, why reproduce a copy?

It speaks much in favor of Mr. Oswald's judgment that he refers to a "recently discovered" portrait only as "attributed to Henry Benbridge." While it resembles Franklin somewhat, how could this be the lost Benbridge "Portrait of a Gentleman" exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1770

and noted by Horace Walpole as "Dr. Franklin of Philadelphia"? In the catalogue of that exhibition this portrait was described as a half length (about 50x40 inches) and could not, therefore, be the bust portrait shown in Mr. Oswald's book.

On what authority it is stated that the "Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky" is "generally accepted" as having been painted by Benjamin West, is not divulged.

There is an interesting collection in the later pages of ornamental snuffboxes, busts, statuettes, plates, and miniatures from the Huntington collection in the Metropolitan Museum. The reproductions of the modern statues add little to our knowledge as they must all be based on the life portrait of some one other than the sculptor or are pure fancy as the first was erected in 1853. While the Houdon bust is included, the bust by Caffieri is not, and we know that Franklin himself preferred Caffieri to Houdon—strange as that may seem—that is, if one can judge from the fact that Franklin ordered four replicas from Caffieri and none from Houdon, so far as the records show.

After Lubbock

SOME GREAT ENGLISH NOVELS: STUDIES IN THE ART OF FICTION. By ORLO WILLIAMS. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1926.

Reviewed by CORNELIUS WEYGANDT

MR. ORLO WILLIAMS conceived as "Old Enchantments" the book he now publishes under the title of "Some Great English Novels." Its purpose was to be a collection of reviews, on rereading, of books that had transported him on a first reading years ago. It was not to be, like the "Corrected Impressions" of Mr. Saintsbury, a reestimate in middle years of authors criticized first in youth, but a return to this book of Defoe and to that book of Samuel Butler that the one and other might exert again its "familiar magic."

Mr. Williams reread "Roxana," "Tom Jones," "Emma," "Martin Chuzzlewit," "Pendennis," "Adam Bede," "The Egoist," and "The Way of All Flesh." These are all but all stories that you do not "find out" on close acquaintance but that you find more worth while the better you know them. The method of criticism employed in studying them, which owes something to "The Craft of Fiction" by Mr. Percy Lubbock, has the basic advantage of giving the critic at least two angles of vision. One side of a book is seen by the critic of twenty, and another side by the critic of forty. In youth there is, as Mr. Williams says, "the shock, the tension, the total absorption of our first submission" to the book. In later years there is, of course, the ability to see in the story what could not be seen before, but what the greater experience and the knowledge of maturity alone can discover.

Such a method of criticism brings to the critic, too, fresh impressions, as well as the opportunity to draw on many memories of the book, memories of thought of it under differing moods and differing conditions. There might well be more of this kind of criticism in our present day writing about literature. It gives the critic space for an outline of the story, for full quotation, for a detailed study of values. With such privileges the critic may make his reader a reader of the book criticized, which is so often to the reader, even if he is a man of cultivation, only an unread classic of familiar name. It may rehabilitate, too, a neglected book, as, we hope, will the chapter of Mr. Williams on "Roxana." Those who are sent back to Defoe will discover that his heroine's arguments about her profession anticipated many of those of Mr. Shaw's Mrs. Warren.

Mr. Williams has background against which to consider these eight books. He has read many other books of his authors, and very many other novels, English, French, and Russian. He can write the discursive sort of criticism when he will, as his two subjoined essays on William de Morgan and Somerville and Ross prove beyond shadow of a doubt. He has good taste and good judgment and experience of life. His book, following on "The Craft of Fiction," tends to show that English reviewing is moving toward a sounder basis. Time was when the reviewer of a book, whether old or new, only dipped into it for a theme and wrote on it a leader rather than a review. Mr. Williams has read the books he criticizes, and reread them, and pondered them, and made them a part of his life. His criticism will stimulate his readers to make these books a part of theirs.



Content and format

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