

praise than this, however, could be given to a book which deserves to be widely read, and must become standard in a field where controversy will always continue, but where facts, guidance, and reasoned judgment (no matter how partisan) have been conspicuously absent. It is this book, and not the inchoate and ill-proportioned "Cambridge History of American Literature," which should be the point of departure for every study in the developing American mind. Many readers will, literally, depart from its conclusions, but none will escape its influence.

Mr. Parrington is a professor in the University of Washington where the last wave of his democratic hope reached the Pacific, and perhaps this book could not have been written except in a West which still remembers, though it does not often practice, Jacksonian democracy. His heroes escape by good fortune the dogmatism of Yale or the selfishness of Harvard, his villains are warped by their New England education. It is cheering to one who believes in decentralization to see the sins of our fathers in culture returned upon their heads by a writer who in his intellectual history has at last escaped from New England into America. Nor has he left his skill, his scholarship, his culture behind.

Blackboard Versus Column

THE MYTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL. By CHARLES W. WOOD. New York: John Day. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOSEPH J. JASTROW

WHETHER this is a book of consequence or futility depends upon how seriously one takes it. It introduces a phrase that may achieve longevity if not immortality. For Mr. Wood academic knowledge is truth "of the blackboard,"—an idol of abstraction. To Mr. Wood, I, as one of the guild, have been living all my life not only *with* a blackboard—which is true—but *on* a blackboard, which invites Mark Twain's comment upon the premature report of his death: "Greatly exaggerated." For my profession concerns mental life as a vivid, crowded reality, even though some of the findings may be put on a blackboard. But in recognizing in studium his true rival, Mr. Wood's instinct is right. Mr. Wood is a journalist; and the account of his career is interesting alike for its early limitations and his assurance that his "fellowship on the Boston and Maine Railroad . . . in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen" taught him more of human nature than any academic Fellowship could have done; so be it.

Mr. Wood has emphatic opinions of his own upon highly vital topics that may possess more "locomotive" truth than is written or dreamt of in your blackboard philosophy. But as I hold that any academicism that is worth its salt must have a strong individualistic flavor, this does not worry me. I have a large sympathy, however tainted with the chalk of the blackboard, with his approach, which is that of an individualist despite the denial of his title. But the conclusion that studies are vanity because some are vainly pursued, and because to a certain mood academic thinking seems a procession of false leads, and comes to life only when vitalized by a generous baptism, even to total immersion, in the waters of reality, is, to adopt Mr. Wood's constant lapse into paradox, both true and false,—and to me by that token false. We agree that truth comes from life: and journalism reflects life, has indeed no other warrant. Yet Mr. Wood, by occupation a journalist, is a philosopher by inclination and intention. In a retort courteous I place him as an exemplar of columnar philosophy,—a brand telling and true enough for the purposes of the daily column, which gives the commuter a reflective "kick" on his way to the city, where it may serve to relieve the tedium of the market talk at lunch, but gives way to a different nugget on the way home. He has ably expanded a columnar philosophy to a volume scale. His challenge becomes a geometrical contest of the blackboard versus the column. With purely academic money, I am backing the blackboard.

His denial of the individual comes dangerously near to an academic distinction. The thesis is this: human relations are the authentic reality; they arise from the social activities of men; they are the issues of cumulative thought and practice, of generations of relationships,—these so completely determine what each one of us is and does, that any "individual" contribution to that total responsiveness which each calls his life is negligibly slight. To

claim it as his own is the "myth." He is human only through this mighty cumulative stream of relations; without it he would be not a Crusoe—an obvious myth—but an anthropoid. The biological part of his conditioning—that which dominates in conditioning the life of a dog or an ape—recedes into insignificance in the perspective of behavior of a twentieth century specimen of American. Except as we stand on the achievements of a human past, our reach of true living would be a feeble grasp. In that sense the individual, if you like, is near to zero in the human equation, and becomes a myth insofar as a disregard of this cumulative collective conditioning through strata of socialized humanity may have brought us to think otherwise. The "John Smith" in the man of that name is a myth as much as the "John Doe" or "Richard Roe" that occupies a space that any other name may fill; he is at all events a speck. But if we accept for the day the thesis as interesting and worth while, we see no reason for not holding on to the accredited sense of individualism, which refers to the more or less distinctive and significant responsiveness so far as it is not wholly submerged in the conventional John-Smithiness of all of us. It is the part of "his" book that makes it reflect Mr. Wood's individualism, which remains vivid despite its official execution.

My point is that to say: "In order that there might be tooth-brushes man had to give up the whole principle of individualism," or "Funny thing, this human nature!" or that Mr. Rockefeller doesn't own his oil, or his money, has indeed to employ experts to spend it, while he can only be trusted to give away shiny dimes; that the steam-engine "knocked the whole family business into a cocked hat," or, to quote from the jacket: "America has moved out of the United States and into Oil and Steel and Electricity;" or, "In times of peace there must be all-around war. But in times of war, there must be complete harmony," and an endless series of similar contributions to columnar philosophy, doesn't get you anywhere; it may be provocative—the favorite word of blurbs—and it may be just provoking. And despite this disguise, one has the impression that Mr. Wood has something to say. This is confirmed by the seriousness of the topics that he discusses,—humanity and morality, love and labor, sex and family, politics and capitalism, crime and social service, war and peace, business and human organization, and by the fact that with all the modernism and radicalism of his approach and his stroke and his game, he finds in the life and sayings of Jesus the most constant guide to the truth as he sees it through a journalistic glass, not darkly but with electric brilliance. One may be excused from the task of setting into some orderly array this definitely engaging set of reflections and opinions on significant issues. If it were a lighter example of columnar philosophy, it might be dismissed altogether.

Perhaps I am taking it too seriously. But it offers occasion to speculate what may be the next stage in popularization after the best-sellership of the "Story of Philosophy," in comparison a drab and retrospective offering, if the scholar is to be replaced by the columnist in such serious issues. It may be that the scholar fails by not letting himself go, often perhaps having little go in him; or that the journalist fails by not holding himself in, often having little to hold. If a journalist believes that literature is journalism with a white collar on, or journalism literature in its shirt-sleeves, this conviction may have no more serious effect than to determine the handling of his "stories;" but it may determine the total range and thought of his contributions. But when the subject matter is science, the resulting perspective and its distortion cuts deeper than form, and may, if it gathers a clientèle, affect mental habits and philosophy more seriously. And in the end it gets nowhere. Somehow one misses the background. It is only when a master blackboardist, such as Bertrand Russell, approaches the same range of problems with the definite intention to bring to a public intelligibility the concentrated results of his reflections, that we seem to have meat enough to justify all the seasoning that he may choose to add. The columnar philosopher mistakes the seasoning for the sandwich and cultivates a false taste and an unhygienic diet. It would be interesting to see the main points of Mr. Wood's contentions translated from the column to the blackboard and find out how far they fuse with the discoveries of other radical-minded and discerning individualists, congenial to Mr. Wood's companionship.

Untermeyer's Parodies

COLLECTED PARODIES. By LOUIS UNTERMAYER. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1926. \$2.75.

Reviewed by LEE WILSON DODD

MR. UNTERMAYER is an accomplished poet, a masterly technician both in verse and prose, a man of wide reading, a sound critic, an admirable anthologist; and in addition to all these gifts he is amazingly clever, famous for his agile wit, his conversational sallies, and his incorrigible puns. It would seem, then, that nature has endowed him with every gift for the production of parody, that exquisite plaything of the sophisticated and critical mind. Yet his collected parodies are for one reader definitely disappointing. I say for one reader advisedly, because the art of parody deals with such delicate imponderables of the mind that it defies analysis. A supremely good parody rings the bell, that is about all one may venture to say about it. But does it ring the bell for all who are in any sense qualified to read it? Probably not. The poetry of Yeats, for example, may weave for you as inescapable a spell as for me, yet we may bring to the reading of Yeats subtle but enormous differences in feeling and apprehension—and, if so, what might strike me as a diabolically right parody of Yeats might very well seem to you narrowly but fatally to have missed its mark. I confess, with reluctance, that over and over again Mr. Untermeyer seems to me to have missed his mark. When I read his facile and expert parodies I am always expecting the bell to ring, but too often it does not do so. It could not surprise me to learn, however, that for many another reader it rings again and again.

It is true, of course, that no parodist, however gifted, is uniformly successful. As a parodist of prose Max Beerbohm is often—to my ear, at least—uncannily perfect; yet his "Christmas Garland" begins with a parody of Henry James which, though it catches the superficial manner, utterly misses the peculiar rhythm, the accent, of that tortuous but always beautifully cadenced prose. These may well seem esoteric considerations; but I believe they make all the difference in parody. You cannot, as a parodist, ring the bell for a given author unless you can reproduce the subtle, entirely personal rhythm of his words. It is just these rhythmical subtleties of style that are the signature of the man. Thus, Yeats could by no possibility have written the following two lines from Mr. Untermeyer's parody of his verse:

Down by the dashing waters the three wise men did go,
And there they cut a hazel wand and laid it in the snow.

There is nothing of Yeats there but the hazel wand—a rather small proportion, and that perhaps too obvious. Nor, though the first line was written by Coleridge, could Coleridge have written:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
In lonely lands though he may be. . .

not because the second line does not harmonize with the first, but because—oh well, because I feel it in my bones that he could not! There is no proving these crepuscular matters. It is simply an assertion I am making because I believe it to be true.

In short, criticism of parody in verse so technically brilliant as Mr. Untermeyer's carries one into transcendental realms of discrimination, becomes entirely subjective—and therefore, doubtless, completely absurd. It is perhaps fairer to close by admitting that I can think of no second American poet who has parodied certain of his contemporaries one-half so well.

The Saturday Review OF LITERATURE

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Published weekly by The Saturday Review Co., Inc., Henry S. Canby, President, Roy E. Larsen, Vice-President, Noble A. Cathcart, Secretary-Treasurer, 25 West 45th Street, New York. Subscription rates, per year, postpaid: in the U. S. and Mexico, \$3.50; in Canada, \$4; in Great Britain, 18 shillings; elsewhere, \$4.50. All business communications should be addressed to Noble A. Cathcart, 25 West 45th Street, New York. Entered as second class matter, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 1, 1879. Vol. III. No. 48.

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Trader Horn of Africa

TRADER HORN: Being the Life and Work of Alfred Aloysius Horn, an "Old Visitor." Taken down and edited by ETHELREDA LEWIS. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1927. \$4.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THERE are two romances here. One is the romance of the African wilderness more than half a century ago—when Livingstone's fame was new, before Stanley was heard of, when Du Chaillu's books were read with incredulity, and while Africa was still a half-fabulous continent of darkness, slavery, cannibal tribes, fevers, and monstrous beasts. This element is a story of incessant adventure, with some touches that might be Rider Haggard's. The other romance is of the discovery, in the year 1925 or 1926, under the mask of a shabby doss-house peddler in Johannesburg, of a gentleman-adventurer, a man of the Trelawney type, a fighter and discoverer fallen upon evil days; the rescue of this grizzled pioneer, his conversion into a historian of his own exploits, and his gradual emergence as an amazing story-teller, philosopher, and *savant*. He is a character who might have stepped from Hakluyt, or Prescott's chronicle of the conquistadores, yet with something Dickensian about him too; he gradually looms up, this man in the habiliments of a "Joburg" beggar, as one of the pathfinders of Africa.



The unusual charm of the book lies in the adroit interweaving of these two elements of romance. We see the two themes, one of incident, one of character, unfold side by side. The more exciting is the penetration of Africa by young Alfred Aloysius Horn, the milk of his English grammar-school still on his lips; his initiation into the mysteries of ivory-trading, gorilla-hunting, cannibal rites, tribal wars, voodooism, and the ways of elephants and pigmies. The more deeply interesting is the portrait of A. A. Horn as an old man, an individual of astonishing saltiness. Illiterate. Proud of his adventures. Proud of his smattering of French, of his ability to paint in oils. Deferential. Yet contemptuous of the lesser breeds like the Portuguese and French. Full of stray memories from all stages of his career—the time he saw Cecil Rhodes dead drunk from too much prickly pear brandy, for example. Full of his own theories about prehistoric Africa, the Malays vs. King Solomon, literature, education, and empire-building. Full of sage bits of philosophy: "Aye, if we'd think of Death as the hand of Nature it'd be no worse than lying down to sleep in a corn-field. It's when the parsons trick out a natural process with all sorts of common regalia like Heaven and Hell that it becomes something to fear."



What made it possible for the book to have this double charm was the tact and wisdom of Mrs. Lewis, the South African novelist who has acted as editor. The "old struggler" Horn, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, came to her door to sell a wire grid-iron which he had twisted. Something in his daunted, much-buffed look caught her eye; once she got him to talk, the Elizabethan sting of his speech caught her imagination. It took effort to lay bare the lode of gold. Hardships, the dust of the years, the weakness of old age, had almost deprived him of his memories of youth, battle, and exploitation in the Africa of 1870 to 1880. But by persistent questioning from Mrs. Lewis, by adroit prompting through old-time dishes, old-time names, old-time press clippings, she helped him dredge up the past from the depths of his consciousness. Week by week, laboring by his candle in his doss-house bed (one shilling a night and neighbors in all stages of drunkenness and rowdiness) old Horn got his chapters down upon paper. The spelling is uncertain, the dates are unreliable, now and then even the elementary facts seem a bit wobbly; but the main structure is admirable. It is one side of Africa of the seventies and eighties—the trader's side—as it has probably never been presented before.

But if Mrs. Lewis was tactful enough to let Horn write his own story, she was also wise enough to perceive that he talked better than he wrote. So when he came weekly to leave his chapter for the book ("It'll be a ponderous work—it sure will. But it's weaving out very nicely. Aye.") she let him talk over his memories as he liked to talk. She has set down these priceless conversations, an intimate revelation of the character of the simple, earthy,

noble old patriarch, as a postscript to each chapter. They vitalize the book. They throw searchlights back through the stilted, misspelt, yet sincere passages which have come from his pen. They are rough like the man; but they enable us to see and hear him better than we see and hear and feel Africa.

Horn must have been eighteen when he reached the West Coast from Liverpool, and set about learning the ivory and rubber trade both as a clerk and as a ranger along the Kamerun and Congo-land rivers. It was a rough world for a lad to be thrown upon. He tells us something of the sickness of the heart he felt when he first saw an African tribesman toss his wornout, ailing mother—as was the custom—into a river full of crocodiles. "Best not to throw too high a light on some of my experiences on the Coast. It never does to give good folk a shock. Aye. Talk of dreadful scenes!" His white associates included pirates, slavetraders, and slave-drivers. His black acquaintances thought nothing of crucifying an enemy head downward. Even the missionaries, to Horn's mind, were none too scrupulous. "Why, Livingstone killed more men than ever I did, with all me rubber and ivories." Horn had a tender heart, as he shows in a passage upon his early hunting experiences:

I stayed two days at Eliwa Mpoloor, and went gorilla hunting on the second day. I managed to shoot one large female, one out of three we met in a grove. The animal was sitting peacefully playing with something near her close to an old tree stump. She was only 250 yards off when I fired she fell forward dead the bullet had gone through her head from temple to temple. On approaching we found a young baby gorilla which had gone to her breast immediately she fell. I felt great sorrow at this sight and made a resolution I would never shoot another of these animals with their babies, it looked too much like murder.



Of many of the Africans, Horn thought highly—of none more highly than the cannibals, to one tribe of whom he became blood-brother. "Cannibals? The most moral race on earth. The women chaste and the men faithful. I've lived amongst them like a brother, a young lad clean and safe." He learned to esteem highly the medical art practised by the natives. Some small red berries cured him of West Coast fever forever. Bark emulsions and the white of wool crickets, stuffed into a wound, cured his thumb when it was half torn off by the explosion of a gun. He saw the native medicine-men extract worms from the eyeball by a little sharp bamboo needle. As for their physical feats, a description which he gives of a muscle dance by a bushman would indicate that it was marvelous.

Then the breasts, first right then left, began to pop in and out, the stomach began to keep time after this the mussels of the arm, then the left eye right eye, then left toe right toe, all keeping time with the music seemingly without an effort, then the right eye then the left eye. We all cheered.

It is a book too crowded to be summarized in any detail. Horn, it is plain, was an untrained and unscientific observer, and we sometimes distrust his impressions. It is also evident that the lapse of time has interfered with his accuracy. Yet the book is so consistently vivid and interesting that we feel glad to strain a point and take almost everything on faith. The native method of impounding and trapping elephants to be killed for ivory; the habits of the gorilla; a fight between dogs and a leopard; a duel between bull elephants; the mad appetite of inland natives for salt; copper manufacture in the jungle; the scenery of the Ogowe and other rivers; tribal initiations; the impostures of witch doctors, and how one unwittingly signed his own death sentence—this is the kind of material which fills the pages. It is all rough hewn, thrown together, higgledy-piggledy, related with much repetition and in commonplace language. Yet the book has constant atmosphere, and its very roughness gives the desired effect. Take Horn's little note on the crocodile, inserted just after his account of how he stabbed a native enemy to death in a river:

Aye, I swam under him, and tapped his claret enough to fetch a whole bevy of crocs for a meal. A crocodile won't eat unless he smells blood. He always needs some appetiser before he'll trouble to eat. But a croc's a thorough pig when he gets you. The smell of blood goes to his head, as they say. He gets a good grip through nature having provided that two of his teeth grow upward through his nose. He's fanciful too about his food. Never cares for it too fresh. His cave entrance is always a bit below the water level, but having dived in he then climbs up to dry ground above the water level. He leaves his meat until the processes of nature invite him to eat. A

proper pig. And never stops growing, the natives say. Aye. Olive green in hunting time. Yellow when the fish are breeding.

The one portion of the book which smacks not of nature and fact but of invention is the section which deals with Nina, a white woman of great beauty, a goddess in Isorga, an English girl captured by the natives and brought up in sacred seclusion. Horn boasts that he rescued her from the temple, at the risk of his life; and that he also stole from the temple a wondrous great ruby, which he later sold for an enormous sum to Tiffany's. The white goddess, the huge ruby, and the mad flight from the temple and down the river to safety may have a certain substructure of act. But some of the embroideries, as has been said, seem to smack of Rider Haggard's fictions. Perhaps Horn confused his memories with various romances which he had read in the far distant past.

But when all deductions and subtractions have been made, the book remains of truly remarkable interest, color, and value. As John Galsworthy says in his introduction, much of it is "gorgeous" and "full of sheer stingo." It is infused with the poetry of wonder. Yet greater than the book, it is clear, is the strange old man who, bent, pipe in mouth, ruminating wisely as he peddled tinware from door to door in South African streets, paused on the brink of the grave to write it. He is fit to stand as a type of the adventurer and pioneer; for the true pioneer is just this combination of artist and philosopher, doer and man of action.

The Literary Pot

WILD GOSLINGS. By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

New York: George H. Doran. 1927. \$2.50.

By DAVID MCCORD,

Author of "Oddly Enough"

WHEN a writer cements in a book what he once poured, liquidly, into a column, he braves a danger. In England he would be an essayist; in America, by the nice adjustment of literary standards, he becomes one. The unfortunate quirk of this prevalent judgment is that, while the first half of it remains largely true, the second rarely follows. We measure our essayists by the volume; in England they do it by the essay. The Englishman, we discover, is an essayist because he is invariably somewhere in the secure and leisurely track of Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, or Stevenson. He is a Machen, a Lynd, a Priestley, or an Alpha of the Plow. If he is very light he is some latter-day Jerome. Yet in either extreme one spies in him at once the quiet craftsman writing, it appears, out of the love of his profession and with a will and purpose that are no one's if not his own. Scratch him, and you will find a certain British distinction to his style; a work unhurried and tranquil. The English columnist, moreover, is producing in spite of his editor and not because of him. The dangerous fevers of the streets wrack him not at all. In the *Guardian*, the *Post*, or the *Saturday Review* he runs forever a normal pulse. A rustic Ryecroft, either he has never heard the terrible "Copy" bawled loudly in his ears or else, with exquisite indifference and command, he has nerved himself against the sound of it.

The American columnist (I do not refer to a column conductor) is rarely any of these things. He writes generally because of his editor and in the fearful temper of the day. He is an arch slave to production. He composes on the typewriter, with the pica stick importunately at his elbow. Far from owning the quiet mind, he is regularly dragooned into refurbishing if not the day's story at least some angular aspect of it. He can be vastly occupied with the thunder of a morning. It is even conceivable that he is happy in the reverberation and echo of which he is so much a part. How is it, then, that he shall produce enduring literature? *Why should he?* After all, the American columnist has set himself in a niche no more secure than the leaves of the calendar which he turns. When he prints in a book the siftings of one year or three it is an outrage to cry that he is not in the company of his English brothers. The book will not alter his paragraphs. Judge him after his own intent.

Mr. Benét, in the puddle of "Wild Goslings," has escaped from and succumbed to all the frailties of his art. His sketches are uneven. They bear the mark of the haste in which they were committed. His style is ruffled and as full of pin-feathers as the birds themselves. These are not necessarily grave faults. They are not in themselves destructive of