

The Saturday Review

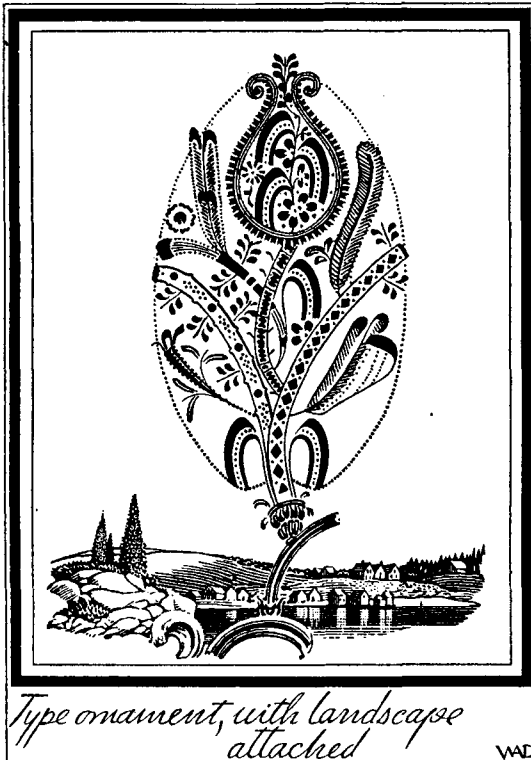
of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Oh for the coast of Maine, a cove, a cot
Disposed in that salubrious situation,—
The rocks, the hills, the pines! And yet it's not
A circumstance to linear decoration.

Snuggedy Swamp

"THE trouble with New York," a wise statesman remarked some weeks ago, "is that it is so full of unnecessary and superfluous people." He might have said "the trouble with America." But they do not move us, these needless people who neither feel keenly nor think with excitement, who neither create, administer, enjoy, nor sympathize. They are the real slaves of the modern industrial order who carry on the economic routine, snuffling with predatory noses or gobbling their limited diet of income, exercise, and lust. If their masters live less happily than Greeks upon the proceeds of their toil, it is because they do not know they are masters.

Nothing counts but energy latent or displayed, or its reflection in such symbols as the tubular masses of the mother factory of the flivver brood in Detroit, the white shaft of the insurance building rising over Columbus, or Snuggedy Swamp. The thousands of dull men and women whose minds are below the life line, the tawdry White Ways of a hundred cities, the endless succession of undistinguished fields streaming by the railroad window, the barren but not beautiful, the jumbled suburb, the strewn boxes of a bungalow settlement, the burnt clearing, the time-clock brain—exist only in the illusion of an indivisible Present and the delusion of a Progress which arrives by mere breeding. The churl had no history and neither have these. They live only in geography or statistics, and an exclusiveness that forgets them when possible is not snobbery but self-defense. It is the arbutus and hepatica in protest against the luncheon box and empty soft-drink bottle, the scarce-won liberty of the intellectual mind denying the weight of the average and the tyranny of mass. It took some billions of years for this slimy planet to be capable of a garden, and some millions before man had both time and inclination to observe the beauty of a breast, the curve of a marsh, the value of a thought not tied to fear or hunger. Shall we lose our gift of humor and pure cerebration on the

concrete highway between signboard and gas station, or in the milling subway crowd? Not by a long sight, while sensibilities are still inherited from good germ plasm. Better a negro cowering from "Plat Eye"* in the moss-draped night than that smug person with manicured brain, and a face that Renaissance painters gave to those who cast lots for the garments of Christ, who is the advance agent for what some call Civilization. But why be either?

All this is a high philosophical Preface to Snuggedy Swamp, yet with so many empty words (as the Chinese say) flying about, such as "Civilization," "Culture," "Beauty," which friends and enemies hurl at each other meaning everything or nothing, a Preface is indispensable. How otherwise indicate that a cypress, a redbird, or a negro child may have more than an atomic significance?

The road to Snuggedy Swamp** leads through the pine barrens, it is the road down which Washington made his majestic progress to see and be seen of the new States. He commented on the poverty of the soil, being, as Mr. Woodward says, a good business executive not inspired by unproductive beauty. Barrens is a harsh name for these stretches of sand set columns, trailed over with amber jessamine and drifted through with green clouds of red-berried cassio, out of which cardinals drop like sparks and mocking birds sing: "Here, here, here, no, no, no, there, there, there, yes, yes, cheerio, cheerio." The road is cinnamon, the darkey houses are set with turquoise shutters under green magnolias, the little "nigs" dance in the sun, the old "dahs" balance baskets of rice lilies on their turbans, whiff smoke from their pipes, and glance out of furtive bird eyes. The men have plug hats over blue jeans. They are not of our world, or of any world but this sunlight on the edge of spectral forests.

Tennyson from his cloud leans his curled beard over this happy animal world and quotes from himself, "I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains." "Which gains?" one murmurs, and moves on down a plantation byway where strings of black children in pinks and blues cloud dark and then flash white teeth as our shadow leaves them, down piney aisles by the great ditch dug once in sweat and pain and laughter that the water might flood the rice fields at the appointed time, and the rice go to the mill, and the money come home to Fair Lawn or Hampton, Harrietta or El Dorado, building the great house which now is fading behind the Corinthian portico into the jungle that comes to meet it across the ruined quarters from the forest, planting the slumbrous avenue of live oaks that drape their splendid melancholy in torn festoons of moss, a camouflage of spacious life withdrawn.

On by the broken flood gates until the forest lifts its knees above black water, and foot goes no further.

Gently the boat moves over water carpets of emerald weed and golden cups of bladderwort,
(Continued on next page)

*See Mrs. Peterkin's excellent "Black April" for more information as to this engaging demon of the swamps and the pine barrens.

**Snuggedy Swamp is, of course, a symbol; yet the name is real, though this description better fits the Santee than the Endisto. It may serve as title for the next new book by Du Bose Heyward, Herbert Sass, Josephine Pinckney, Beatrice Ravenel, or someone else of the Charleston School. Symbol or no, it has been painted by Alice R. Huger Smith in pictures that transcend reality.

American Novels

By MAXWELL BODENHEIM

CURIOSLY enough, many of the men and women who attempt literary criticism in America are moderately responsive to experiments in poetry and implacably opposed to the slightest innovation in the medium of prose fiction. Commencing with a mild hostility toward free-verse, when it uprose in America twelve years ago, their appreciations have now become elastic enough to include the shallow diableries of an E. E. Cummings and his cohorts. In the realm of the novel, however, their attitude is unyielding, and this stubbornness even extends to the few more radical and actual critics—men and women such as Joseph Wood Krutch, Kenneth Burke, Marianne Moore, and others—though the latter are willing to hail an impressionistic, moving-picture method such as that used by John Dos Passos in "Manhattan Transfer." Often, in extenuation of their obstinacy, many of these critics and "critics" contend that James Joyce, in "Ulysses," exhausted the possibilities in novel-experimentation, and that future novelists—for many generations at least—must accept him as their receding horizon. This position of final worship, however, frequently hides the desire to seize upon one huge literary pathfinder and employ him to discountenance the other explorers who may spring up after him. It would be safe to say that not one half of the critics who praise Joyce really understand or deeply appreciate him, and that very few of them are genuinely responsive to general experimentation in prose fiction, and the reasons behind this critical *impasse* are clear enough but scarcely ever admitted.

The novel has become a last refuge for critical and creative conservatives and liberals of all kinds because it is a medium in which they can more easily approach impressiveness without courting originality and without facing the demand for concentration

This Week



"Type Ornament." By W. A. Dwiggins.

"Quatrain." By William Rose Benét.

"The Road to the Temple." Reviewed by Arthur Davison Ficke.

"Monteverdi," and "Thirty Years' Musical Recollections." Reviewed by Roy D. Welch.

"Opium." Reviewed by Malcolm Davis.

"American Criticism," and "Transition." Reviewed by Ernest Boyd.

"Orient Express." Reviewed by Arthur Ruhl.

Qwertyuiop: A Shirtsleeves History. "Forever Free." Reviewed by Allan Nevins.

"Morning, Noon, and Night." Reviewed by Grace Frank.

Next Week, or Later

"The Rebellious Puritan." Reviewed by Julian Hawthorne.

inherent in verse and plays. Three hundred and fifty pages offer a broad shelter to those who would be baffled by the vivid, intensely stripped, and penetrating compression exacted by an infinitely shorter poem, or the swifter nakedness of unbroken dialogue, and within this wider space the writer can more readily defend and intrench whatever misconceptions, small prejudices, and mental lazinesses he may possess. They cannot be hidden or cunningly excused in the fiery, quick delvings of verse and plays, but in a novel they may be bolstered by a more leisurely and redundant process, with realistic and colloquial conversations lending plausibility to the distortions and limitations of the author's mind; with a detailed air of seriously investigating character, beneath which the author may hug his standstills and timidities; with that outpouring of immense, spontaneous, slipshod energy which is alone vital and breathing to most critics; and with hosts of stenographic and visual accuracies, attached to the men and women within the novel and bestowing a counterfeit of truth upon the author's mental and emotional restrictions and evasions.



It has been customary for the novelist to veil his intentions beneath an attitude of realistic detachment, and deluded critics have forever welcomed this concealment as an indication that the novelist was refraining from intruding upon his people and was advancing them in their actuality. In reality, such an impartial aloofness does not and could not exist. In this regard, novelists are divided into three wide classes—those who openly exhibit the prejudices, obsessions, and peculiarities that make them individuals; those who *lurk intensely* behind the scenes and watch the effect of their previous commands; and those who compromise by striving to appear and disappear at different times. The writers in the second class prefer to make themselves unobtrusive in the desire to assign an indirect persuasiveness to their individualities, with egotism becoming less offensive and more surface unassuming as it speaks through a variety of idioms, characters, and disguises. If a novelist of this kind is successful in his aim, an unusual amount of peering must be employed to establish his essential resemblance to the writers in the first and third classes—a deep and sustained scrutiny which would seem to be foreign to most critics of our time. This scrutiny can discover, however, that the difference between novelists apparently as dissimilar as Joseph Conrad and Sherwood Anderson is that of an infinitely careful masquerade as opposed to a flaunted and unashamed nakedness.

Joseph Conrad, with his fusion of tolerance and gloom—the patient and subdued irony of an aristocrat—hides behind bold narratives of sailors, adventurers, soldiers, and proud, mysterious women, and does not impede the motion and exterior drama of his plots by pausing to confess the likes and dislikes within his being. The prototypes of his characters would not invariably act and speak as they do in his novels, nor would they invariably fail to react in these days. Certain individuals among them, most responsive to his likes, or more appropriate material for his aversions, contend against each other in a drama arranged, qualified, and frequently even distorted by his individuality. These alterations are least manifest because they occur beneath a stripped and quick-rhythmed story where every effort is made to advance them *under* the narrative-devices of faithful and abundant vernacular, unburdened action, and accurate local-color. In an Anderson novel, on the other hand, the characters are frankly moulded and directed by the author's egotism. Their relation to possible duplicates in life is by no means more remote than that of the Conrad men and women—it has simply been relegated to a secondary position in the aims of the novelist. Anderson does not consciously seek to comfort his characters but candidly reveals and even glories in the designs, admirations, and hatreds within him, which dominate the motives and words of his human beings. His people are neither real nor unreal, but selected, exaggerated, and diminished in an open way—a process which, in Conrad, occurs beneath every possible semblance of obliteration. Wandering through the nooks, highways, and seas of this world, however, one might become a trifle nonplussed at the difficulty of discovering men and women who spoke, lived, and reacted substantially in the same ways in which they do on the pages of the two novelists in question. One might find many resemblances, but an equal if not greater

number of contradictions, discrepancies, and omissions would also be unearthed, and if the wanderer did not happen to be a literary critic, he might yield to the additional worry of not always being quite certain whether his perceptions were not leading him astray, in the same measure to which those of Conrad and Anderson operated.

The doctrine of reality in prose-fiction—of a naturally breathing, indisputable replica of men, women, and their moving or inanimate backgrounds—is the imposing myth which is preventing the novel from developing at present, and which has tended to restrict it in the past. The characters in a novel are and must be essentially *imaginary*—characters transformed as they emerge from the half-misty maze of the writer's recollections and from the inevitable frustrations, desires for triumph, and general fallibility which dominate this remembrance. When this fallibility is by no means patent or absurdly demonstrated, and when it is able to defend itself through the use of a deliberately brilliant or spontaneously dramatic presentation, the novelist wins a firm place in the literature of his time and secures a large or small band of readers and admirers. If his prejudices and desires are largely in harmony with those of an abundant number of the educated and culture-striving people within his time—or a considerable fraction thereof—he becomes popular and remains so unless the number dwindles radically in succeeding generations. If, on the other hand, his aversions and delights are reiterated by a much smaller group of people, he becomes relatively unpopular unless this group expands after his demise. In no case, however, is his appeal founded upon the truth and realistic fidelity of his work. His readers, of course, may tell themselves that they have accepted or rejected him on the strength of such an appeal, but in such a case they are merely exhibiting the human tendency to manufacture glowing and entirely unsupported reassurances. Except in those extreme cases where the novelist's sentimentality, commercial insincerity, grotesque intolerance, or small and shallow sermonizing, would seem to be both crude and obvious, his violation of reality is based upon evidences that can never be the same to all perceptions—a situation not necessarily connected with stupidity or intelligence!

One might travel about, with a stenographer and a moving-picture camera at hand, without in any way capturing this dodging and problematical essence, since it is even more concerned with the less visible and audible, and infinitely more entangled, presence of explanatory and often eradicating motives, causes, and objectives. In fact, the camera-stenographer method would militate against the plausibility of the reports, since they would remind one of Robots with suspiciously perfect surfaces, neither convincing nor unconvincing, but simply a succession of unsolved and noisily active exteriors. Many modern novelists, in their passionate chase of the reality-myth, succeed only in achieving a Vitaphone presentation—perfectly synchronized action, talk, and appearance, with the author's individuality sleeping uneasily beneath the presentation and occasionally awakening to interfere with the smooth accuracies of his court-reporting. In this manner, he provides his readers with that undelving, unoriginal, but compassionate and faithfully attired effect which is so captivating alike to the H. L. Menckens and Paul Rosenfelds of our time. When considering the works of Theodore Dreiser, Willa Sibert Cather, Joseph Hergesheimer, and other contemporary novelists, these critics discard their pretence of antagonism toward each other and join in one outburst of praise lavished upon the prose-fiction writers in question.

Their differences are largely concerned with twists in literary style, and one or two prejudices zealously guarded and advanced. Mr. Rosenfeld, for instance, would hail innovations in the selection and combination of verbs, adverbs, and adjectives, and would be more friendly to a wild immersion in sexual matters, whereas Mr. Mencken would dismiss these novelties as trivial, obscure, or unintelligible, and would desire his sex to be more cynically restricted, and more self-doubting. Underneath these contrasts, however, both critics follow the reality-myth and desire the characters in a novel to be convincing duplicates of the men and women in life. Their disagreement is upon what constitutes such a duplication, but their longings for it do not vary. In conjunction with most of the literary critics in this country, they are averse to the novelist who disregards their phantom and

openly shapes his people according to the incentives which motivate his creations, and who interposes his peculiar philosophic and emotional outlook between the words and actions of his characters, in place of changing this outlook to a stage-director who disappears into the wings after the last rehearsal!

Of course, any critic is within his rights if he chooses to call a novelist fantastic when this novelist overwhelmingly affronts the critic's cherished delusion of reality, but when the critic goes further and claims that the particular offender is also obnoxiously egotistic, confined, and unprobing, the matter passes into one of disparaging wraiths—unsubstantiated allegations. An intense and fallible individuality is the unveiled or secret source of every writer's creations, and unless the critic can prove, *specifically and at length*, that this fallible ego has become unusually swollen and implausible in its contentions and analyses, he has no right to berate the author on the score of defiantly uncovered like and dislike.

When American novels desert their cut-and-dried, often tediously elaborate "plots," when they become more concerned with inward investigations and less immersed in outward, colloquial, and visual fidelities; when they abandon the stumbling, unsubtle styles to which they cling, under the impression that they are reiterating the awkward vigors of actual life; when they regard reality as a lure and not as a definite end whose attainment can be clearly established; when they concentrate to one hundred and fifty or two hundred pages; and when they regard individuality as an inevitable foundation, and not as the spectre that must be subdued and qualified—when these alterations occur, the novelists in this country may approach in their own ways, the originality, and the brilliant and yet wistful edges of a Remy de Gourmont's "Horses of Diomedes." Until then, they will remain in their present stationary and admired situation.

Snuggedy Swamp

(Continued from page 673)

pushing between tapered columns in a gray dusk, green glowing at the roof. Turtles plop, bright alligators slide over black logs; a cypress, set with white birds as with candles, is suddenly awave with flashing wings as the ibis flock circles through the gloom to light. With slow beat the great white egrets fly over the bursting tree tops, each silent bank and dip and pulse an accent upon solitude.

Then the bayou of Snuggedy Swamp, a landscape from the moon, where spectral cypresses bow mossy beards, grey old men forgotten in a wilderness of black water; the quiet of Africa over still flowing water, still flowing moss in rhythm without motion, beautiful stagnation, the grey heart of the lowlands into which has drained all the slow melancholy of this deserted earth, and lies content there—a warbler singing like a tinkling bell in the dusk, —an egret in the sky. . . .

"What of it, poet?" It is impossible to answer with the assured obscurity of Browning. In the large it means too much, in the little only Snuggedy Swamp, and the herons just up from the tropics. It means no more than the seven mile sweep of a sea island beach, where the sturdy palmettoes wave their fronds over the last strong lift of ocean: "This is America. No further." It means neither more nor less.

Yet Snuggedy Swamp is older than the Woolworth Building and perhaps more powerful. We who are alive will all paddle through its cypress arches in time, or, if the wish prefers it, climb our Berkshire hill or high Sierra. Drop houses where you will and stretch developments from Florida to Long Beach and back by way of California, you cannot subdue the singular nor keep the nonconformist eye to the geometry of a city block. We will use the apparatus of your civilization and thank Progress for hot water and a safety razor and a car that follows the back country ruts, but we will not give up good talk, good thought, and Snuggedy Swamp if the majority itself in form of Beelzebub (whose name was legion) insists that the way of life is comfortable dulness and its object getting nowhere in particular in a terrible hurry. If the commonalty will not ask for ibises let them have Long Island duckling. No tripe for us. There is still balm in Gilead which only fastidiousness can appreciate. There would be no literature if they should drain all the Snuggedy Swamps.

G. C. Cook: Mad Humanist

THE ROAD TO THE TEMPLE. By SUSAN GLASPELL. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1927. \$3.

Reviewed by ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

THIS book is the biography of a real man, George Cram Cook; but so varied was this man's life that montony is the last thing the reader need fear to find in it.

It is difficult to write even a review that concerns Cook without emotion; for his glowing, rich, child-sweet personality haunts, like the echoes of a bell, the memories of all who knew him. Therefore it is no small achievement for Miss Glaspell that she has created here a vivid, moving, but never sentimental picture of this man who was her husband.

George Cram Cook, Charles Edward Russell, Susan Glaspell, Floyd Dell, Harry Hansen, and the writer, all came from the same Mississippi Valley town, Davenport, Iowa. Probably if the average man in that town were asked today, he would give it as his opinion that five out of those six people had achieved certain degrees of success in the outside world as writers; but that the sixth was a complete failure. The sixth would be Cook.

And that is, in a sense, perfectly true. Yet George Cook's failure was of a kind considerably more interesting and useful than most men's successes; and one thinks of him along with such other abject failures as Blake and Shelley. His genius was not as great as theirs, but his passion was the same.

Cook's life was a search for illumination—for a rich and humane and beautiful way of living out one's mortal days—for a completeness of experience, emotional and intellectual, such as most men never even dream of. The simple, straightforward path of the average citizen held no allurements for him; he would cheerfully have shot himself rather than accept the standardization required of the prosperous man in present-day America. He dreamed dreams of a life made free and beautiful and coöperative for all men; and because of this crime he was looked on a little condescendingly by the unimaginative world into which he was born. He had Goethe's passion for universal scope of emotion and of knowledge; and Miss Glaspell's title, "The Road to the Temple," is accurately descriptive of the path on which Cook spent his fifty years. Any man who spends his life on that road will of necessity sacrifice many things—among which is likely to be the pleasure of hearing other men call him a success.

Miss Glaspell, in relating this story, does precisely what Cook's living presence did: she puts before our eyes the picture of a life lived for the sake of values that are not the colorless values of ordinary lives, but in which a creative freshness and a fearless searching are the actuating forces. The influence of this spirit of Cook's was very widespread. Many a successful living writer or painter owes more than he knows to Cook's visionary, impassioned, forever idealistic conversations. His enormous influence on the development of the Provincetown Players is one example. It may be said without too great exaggeration that out of Cook's imagination grew a large part of the development of the American theatre which we have witnessed during the last fifteen years.

This story of Cook's life—and it is really a story, not a dry account of dates and deeds—begins with Cook's early days on the old Mississippi Valley farm which he always managed to make so romantic. He made the farm romantic by virtue of his own deep sense of past lives and future lives hovering around the old place; he lived with depths of time around him, and the air was thick for him with invisible presences. He thus gave to his own life a kind of symbolic dignity: on the one side, he was always conscious of the great Mississippi River rolling endlessly down the valley; on the other side, he always felt the great river of civilization flowing down the ages from those Greek hills where he was eventually to die. During all the years of his varied life, these two things were his spiritual well-springs. The story ends when, at the age of fifty, he lay dead at Delphi, with a chorus of lamenting Greek shepherds around him.

He was novelist, philosopher, teacher, playwright, farmer, poet, soldier, violinist, lover, drinker, dreamer, actor, revolutionist, mystic. He made endless fragmentary notes about everything that in-

terested him—and that included almost everything in the world, past, present, or future. With great skill, Miss Glaspell incorporates some of these passages in her narrative, and produces an effect of almost startling vividness and reality. One actually hears the man's voice—that deep rich voice, with its great laugh never very far away. One of these notes,—unconsciously symbolic, perhaps,—says of his boyhood days beside the Mississippi: "I built the city of Troy in the sand on the shore of the island, while Dad and his friends fished from the boat or along the shore. They seldom caught anything." George Cook, also, seldom caught anything; he never tried; but his city of Troy still exists: it is this book.

"Capacity for thought and feeling is the test of man or woman. The production and appreciation of noble beauty is the test of civilization." So, in the year 1896, spoke Instructor Cook, aged twenty-three, to the boys and girls of the cornfields. When he died at Delphi, twenty-eight years later, it was in the same faith.

Heaven help America when the last futile dreamer has been standardized out of existence!

Brilliant writer of fiction though Susan Glaspell is, one may well doubt whether she has ever invented a tale that is quite as thrilling as this true history—which she has related with fine artistry, and with the most noble respect for the memory of a noble man.



GEORGE CRAM COOK
In Greek peasant dress

A Great Composer

MONTEVERDI, HIS LIFE AND WORK. By HENRY PRUNIÈRES. Translated from the French by Marie D. Mackie. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1926.

THIRTY YEARS' MUSICAL RECOLLECTIONS. By HENRY CHORLEY. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1926.

Reviewed by ROY DICKINSON WELCH
Smith College

HENRY PRUNIÈRES'S study of the life and works of Monteverdi restores a great composer to his rightful place in the history of music. The new issue of Chorley's "Recollections" under the editorial guidance of Ernest Newman leaves many obscure musicians in their obscurity. M. Prunières writes as a historian, a critical historian deeply aware of the incontestable judgments that are due his subject. Chorley wrote of current musical events in mid-nineteenth century England and, necessarily, his chronicle lacks perspective. Both books, with the exception of certain parts of the "Recollections," which discuss operas still current, deal with music that has been touched with oblivion. Monteverdi's work emerges with the seal of immortality upon it. The singers and dancers in Chorley's pages are not really brought to life for us, nor do his enthusiasms for obsolete or obsolescent operas preserve them from the hand of time.

But these books have so little in common that it is unfair to contrast or compare them. The fortuitous chance that brought them to hand at the same moment does not justify bracketing them together. Both books do, however, speak of music which we seldom hear and of many musicians whom we shall never hear, and to that extent they have a common problem. No other art, save perhaps dancing, is so nearly impossible to reconstruct in a page of prose as music. The delight in expressive

musical sounds, the marvel of their infinite nuance and combination, the movement, the life, these are not to be caught on a page of printed words. There is always something tangential about musical criticism. It touches the living art at one point or another and then runs a straight line into the personality of the critic. Some criticism, like that of Prunières in his "Monteverdi," very nearly succeeds in holding its object up to view, leaving the writer out of the picture. Other musical criticism is frankly a record of personal tastes and enthusiasms. This is Chorley's bent. There is much to be admired in both; certainly both attract readers—discriminating readers—after their own kind.

M. Prunières describes three important aspects of Monteverdi and his works. Each of these aspects is admirably dealt with and together they present the musician in the round. The man is here, a man living at the court of Mantua in the late sixteenth century and in the Serene Republic of Venice in the early seventeenth, living among these extravagant and high-handed societies with strict honor, chastity, and industrious sobriety. He occupied positions of eminence in both cities. His worth was recognized by his immediate associates and far beyond in Germany, France, and Flanders. The picture, as M. Prunières draws it, is of a man outwardly a little remote from the life about him, austere, even, in his bearing, but a man who understood that life better than those who lived it more unreservedly. A devoted husband, a solicitous father, a faithful official, he was, however, not a sycophant in a society which took obsequious gesture as common courtesy.

The picture of Monteverdi, the man, and the analysis of the influences under which he worked, illuminating as they are, are not the most valuable part of M. Prunières's study. The best part of the book is the description and appraisal of Monteverdi's music. This is what most needed to be done and what gives us a sense of the astounding insight and capacity of this man, who deserves to be named with Gluck and Wagner as the greatest influences in the lyric drama. Monteverdi's work, save for a few fragments, had been almost lost. The revival of an opera now and then (the most recent of these revivals occurred at Smith College, Northampton, Mass., when the "Incoronazione di Poppea" was given on April 27, 1926) and an air sung occasionally in concert were all of this astonishing music that we knew. For the rest we had the second or third hand accounts of the many dictionaries. But M. Prunières has gone to the manuscripts and the printed scores and he recounts his findings with such clarity and acumen that readers with no more than a modicum of technical learning may perceive the outlines of a great figure. Here we may follow the course of a genius who realized at a flash what was latent in the then new style of dramatic music. From 1600 when Canon Artusi aimed his famous critique, "On the Imperfections of Modern Music," at Monteverdi and Gesualdo, upbraiding these "modern composers for their desire to delight the 'sense' rather than to satisfy the 'reason,'" from that time to the end of his career Monteverdi's "only object is to express as intensely as possible the passions which agitate the human soul!" Even a madrigal is for him "a means of reaching a new ideal, which he but dimly perceived (in 1605) and which defined itself more and more clearly, namely, dramatic expression." But he does not divest himself, as did the Florentine innovators of the new dramatic style, of all that the art of music had yielded: "he was too essentially a musician to resign himself to an impoverishment of music." Rather he uses his heritage of polyphony though he very early compelled polyphony to "appear in unwonted forms of almost monstrous beauty."

The revolution Monteverdi effected in the technic of his art, such as the use, in the fifth book of madrigals (1605), of chords of the seventh and ninth taken without preparation, the new discoveries in orchestral possibilities, the foreshadowings of the operatic aria—these, and other similar matters have been described before. They are amplified in M. Prunières' account. As facts they are not new; they take on new significance in these pages. The present English edition is a very competent translation by Marie D. Mackie. Numerous musical illustrations are supplied and forty-three of Monteverdi's letters are printed in Italian at the end of the volume. A summary of the contents of these letters is given in English.