

Books of Special Interest

Sprightly Psychology

PSYCHOLOGY: A Simplification. By LLOYD RING COLEMAN and SAXE COMMINS. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1927.

Reviewed by JOSEPH JASTROW

THE title of this review implies as serious a criticism as this really meritorious effort deserves; for the average of the chapters in content and grasp and carrying power is definitely to the good, despite the more than occasional misses, the equally frequent, if slight, distortions of focus, and the occasional clowning. It is a little difficult to juggle a ball and a feather at the same time; for however light the substance there is a message, a fact, a principle, a point of view, an insight to convey as well as the short reach of the reader to consider. The plan of making the reader think by keeping him amused can be overdone.

Yet the reader who draws this volume from the neighborhood library will be satisfied with his choice. Reading it will do him a lot of good without hurting him. He will have a better insight into what goes into the making of his mind, and what has come out of a devoted study of its workings by those competent in the field. One must know the make-up of the casual reader to predict how many will go away with the impression that some persons are so constituted as to adopt psychology as their favorite indoor sport, how many with the impression that it is an intricate mass of opinions in which one professor's guess is matched by another's denial, how many with the impression that it is really a worth-while occupation, has a meaning for them and contributes to the illumination of the world in which they are living mentally as well as physically.

The volume invites consideration of the desirable kinds of popularization. One such book is good; to have it set the style for ideals of popularizing would be a misfortune. The tradition is bad enough, and nowhere worse than in the minds of editors of popular magazines who seem to be convinced that anything is true and important if it can be put in sprightly language, and

nothing not so phraseable can go far in either value. These appeals to the thirst for knowledge find their congenial display and reflection of their contents in drug-stores, harboring a small and inconspicuous prescription department for those in need of some serious aid, among a bewildering array of candies and sweets, cigars, vanities, frivolities, and tid-bits, everything to tickle and nothing substantial,—and all flashing in gay wrappings. What might pass as an occasional indulgence has become the steady diet of the multitude. It would be a calamity if that same misconception of human needs and the proper mode of their satisfaction should invade the library. The competition of the drug-store and the newsstand increases the responsibility of the library and of popular writers.

Though this may be too heavy a preamble for the topic in hand, it happens to make a good text, and a preface for a brief indication of the quality of the wares offered in this welcome addition to the popular shelf on psychology. In content the survey is ample. It begins with the abnormal, thus introducing the variations and the variants of the total individual, and uses the changes in treatment of mental disorder as convincing proof of the pragmatic value of a point of view. The study of mental inadequacy gave rise to the need of mental test and the resulting scales. Biology presents its quota by way of inheritance in the making of a man. There follows the newer insight into the nature of childhood and the incomparable significance of the genetic approach, while the inclusions of the animal brought at once objective methods and the clear simplification of the factors that still play a leading rôle when the animal happens to be so complex as a man. The "mosaic" as the pattern of analysis and synthesis in the organism is the rather too limited recognition given to the central factors of the mental mechanism, and the treatment of the by-paths of hypnosis, dual personality, telepathy is least successful. The applied field is generously and ably considered, the survey including crime and religion as significant products of the human psyche, to be probed and set in a newer light by the

convergence of all the later insights. Social psychology introduces man in his relational aspect and the vast enrichment of behavior in that indispensable setting of all human nature as a going concern. The applications to education, to industry, to the problems of personnel and the specialized fitness that modern needs require, as well as to the ancient and once again honorable study of character and types of human capacity and their signs and relations. The volume closes with an instructive survey of the different and warring schools each asserting a dominance of the whole field, of the value of psychologies—structural, functional, dynamic, behavioristic, Freudian, Gestalt, and their varieties—and the conviction that an inclusive synthesis is still to be made that will restore the total man buried in these several partial versions, and make a vital reality out of a reconstructed torso.

The chapters devoted to the general interpretations of psychological points of view to human problems, social, abnormal, educational, practical, are the best in statement and discrimination. The actual fact—content is not sufficient to indicate the evidence, the authors preferring to report general conclusions and to interpret their bearing. For informational content such worthy popularizations as those of Adams, Humphrey, Troland, C. K. Ogden, are richer. Messrs. Coleman and Commins paint a larger canvas with broader strokes in the interests of an impression from a distance. They have avoided, as do all wise popularizers, any talking down. They are dealing with matters that require certain concepts, a certain vocabulary, and they possess the intelligence to regard these not as obstacles, as children look upon long words, but as the only adequate terms for their subject. If anyone is inclined to regard this type of presentation as skilled reporting, it may be argued that anything well enough done is an art, and that the amount of information and grasp needed to carry through this enterprise is itself a warrant for offering one's service as a cicerone to those less well informed. Their book is a useful guide, and in view of the complexities of the country through which the journey goes, the relief of an easy and often engaging touch is welcome. This accompanies the reader through to the end. There is a bibliography with two-or-three-line appraisals that are often trenchant; and it is no slight feat to make a book-list interesting.

Ancient Greece

HELLENISTIC CIVILIZATION. By W. W. TARN. London: Edward Arnold & Co. 1928. \$6.

Reviewed by HETTY GOLDMAN

MR. TARN, whose brilliant work on special features of the Hellenistic period of Greek history is known to all who concern themselves with that subject, and who has recently gained a wider public by his contributions to the Cambridge Ancient History, is the author of an admirable book called "Hellenistic Civilization." It appeals to those who read neither the learned journals, which may be said to occupy the bleak polar regions of historic research, nor the popular distortions in journalistic vein which burn luridly at its equator, but who wish their facts stated with accuracy and interpreted with insight and imagination. In the author's own words: "The book is neither a history nor a textbook, but an attempt to get a general picture of the civilization of the Hellenistic period, covering all the main subjects." The first chapter, "Historical Outline," is a model of condensation and as clear as the subject permits. Dealing as it does with so many personalities, intrigues, warfares, shifting alliances, and changing fortunes, it cannot but cause a certain confusion in the mind of the reader which is inherent in the subject rather than in the manner of telling. This chapter serves only as a necessary background. The real concern of the author is with forms of government, and with the features, racial, social, economic, and cultural which give the Hellenistic period its individuality and differentiate it from the Greek civilization that was its predecessor.

Mr. Tarn's imagination is not of the kind that indulges in flights. It is willing to accompany a sober narrative and enhance its meaning at every step. Into the enumeration of eastern products and the towns and routes by which they reached their destination, he has put some of the poetry and almost the magic of sound which a medieval writer evoked from the names of Fair Women. May one suggest too that Mr. Tarn is a historian with humane sympathies as well as intelligent understanding?

Problems of the Pacific

Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Honolulu, 1927

Edited by J. B. CONDLIFFE

IN Honolulu in the summer of 1927 the representatives of nine diverse civilizations conferred upon matters of mutual concern. The proceedings of this second Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations are complete in this book, which is a political and social document of the greatest importance.

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Old Mother Earth

By KIRTLEY F. MATHER

Professor Mather is one of the many men of science who are devoting part of their time to the "conscious adventure of humanizing knowledge." The fifteen chapters in this book constitute a series of "arm-chair talks" on the origin and history of the earth and its inhabitants, ranging from "The Origin of Life" to "Earthquakes," from "The Evolution of Mankind" to "The Great Ice Age," from "The Philosophy of Evolution" to "Geology and Genesis." His statements are authoritative, but are not obscured by technical language; the 61 illustrations are remarkable in themselves. \$2.50

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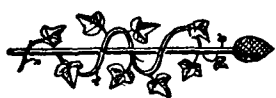
By ELBY WAGNER

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A New Book by the Author of A PASSAGE TO INDIA, Etc. E. M. FORSTER



SIX of E. M. Forster's works had appeared in this country before his "A Passage to India" won him the enduring reputation and the larger number of readers to which his merit entitled him. There is an element of fantasy about the stories in this volume, whether their scenes are laid in England or on the Continent, or in the countries of the future. With his short-stories which appeared in the *Celestial Omnibus*, this book completes, says Mr. Forster, his work in this particular line. Only one of the stories has ever been printed in America. \$2.50

The ETERNAL MOMENT

Harcourt, Brace and Company

From A British Musketeer

By HAMISH MILES

MY Dear George Jean Nathan: You are not expecting this letter. It comes from a stranger, and from England. But it happens that I have just been reading three very remarkable columns, headed "American Literature and British Snipers," which you wrote for the April number of *The American Mercury*.

I hardly suppose you really meant them to draw the fire of any particular British musketeer. But as the "Mercury" did me the honor of sending over an advance proof of your "Clinical Notes" for the month, as if reluctant to touch off this long-range cannon without some warning to the peace-loving, I'd like to do you the courtesy of standing up forthwith and levelling my firelock in your direction, in defence, at any rate, of such of my compatriot critics as were not thus favored.

Briefly, your case is this: that a spirit of permanent hostility between America and Britain is being fostered by what you term the "arbitrary snootishness, condescension and downwright animosity of England and the English to almost all American literary endeavor, however worthy." For "hardly an American book, of whatever sort," you assure your readers, "can be published in England without calling forth in English newspapers and periodicals a violent nose-fingering and derision. Even the best American writers are waved aside as mere literary bounders or are denounced with a superior and offensive air as provincial amateurs." And you argue, naturally, that this is a dangerous and deplorable state of affairs, and that Downing Street (presumably through the Foreign Office—or should it be the Board of Education?) ought to give the litterateurs responsible for it a good talking-to.

Well and good. It is satisfactory at least to find someone standing up as you do, my dear Mr. Nathan, for the high import of letters and criticism in the national, and international, life. Believe me, it ought to be a proud day for the pen-pushers of both our countries when the trouble really comes to a head. What a grand new Tea Party that will be, when some fine afternoon the outraged scribes of New York are whooped up at news of the *Mauretania* with incoming mails being past the Ambrose Light, when, disguised perhaps as ship's-news reporters, they out and board her in the Narrows, and heave into the welcoming depths those offending bundles of *Spectators* and *New Statesmen*, those tyrannical bales of the *Times Literary Supplement*. . . . That will be the end of bickering. After that, as you hint, there will be nothing for it but War.

But what is your evidence of the plot? Who are these persecuted American authors? Which are the English journals that cock their derisive snoots at bare mention of their names? When you declare that there are scores of English critics, great and small, who "lose no opportunity to deride and insult American writers, denying them fair criticism and giving them instead only the ready-made and rubber-stamp aspersions, disparagements, sneers and catcalls," or further that "the literary critics of the London weeklies laugh sarcastically and obstreperously when an American happens to mention the name of Cabell or Sherwood Anderson or Dreiser,"—why, you are simply bombinating happily in a great void. I defy you to name one single journal of any literary repute in this country, whether a staid and conservative organ like the *Times Literary Supplement*, or a comparatively "advanced" one like the *Nation* or *New Statesman*, or a half-way house like the *Saturday Review*, or a frankly popular book-news weekly like *John o' London's*, or an organ of purely critical ideas like the *Monthly Criterion*—to name a single one which encourages or displays any such futile attitude as you gratuitously suggest.

(You might perhaps point to the lacerated bodies of Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein and Anita Loos, left on the stricken field by Wyndham Lewis after his onslaught in the last issue of his one-man review, *The Enemy*. But nobody could interpret that assassination as a merely anti-American gesture: after all, it was quite an international sort of holocaust, and you will find also in the debris the bodies of the Englishman D. H. Lawrence, the German Spengler, the Frenchman Bergson. . . .)

But "literary bounders!" And "provincial amateurs!" Nobody, my dear Mr. Nathan, of the slightest literary importance in this country has talked of such things for years and years! Your information is utterly demoded. Do you suppose that the

Rev. Sydney Smith is still chirruping at the literary dinner-tables? The claims of modern American writers to be heard in England, as Americans, and as writers, are perfectly well established. I have no time to poke about in the files of the literary journals of the past few years, but I simply reach over from where I am now sitting and pick up, absolutely and honestly at random, a few recent issues of London weeklies. Here they are: three of the *Times Literary Supplement*, and four of the *New Statesman*, all dated during February or March, 1928. It is a fair cross-section. And if I clipped the relevant reviews and articles just from these seven unselected numbers for you, what would you find?

- (1) A serious and commendatory review of Dreiser's "Chains"—part of a uniform edition of his works at present being issued, set-up and printed here by Constable. (T. L. S.)
- (2) Another, critical, but not in the least derisive or nose-fingering, of the same Dreiser volume. (N. S.)
- (3) Commendatory review of a re-issue of John Weldon Johnson's "Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man." (T. L. S.)
- (4) Do. do. of John W. Vandercook's "Black Majesty." (N. S.)
- (5) Do. do. of "Best Short Stories of 1927, American," with special praise of Ernest Hemingway and Lyle Saxon. (N. S.)
- (6) Do. do. of a re-issue of "The Education of Henry Adams," drawing attention to its importance in a study of "the modern American consciousness." (N. S.)
- (7) Do. do. of H. L. Mencken's "Prejudices: Sixth Series." (N. S.)
- (8) A whole column of shrewd and careful appraisal, fully appreciative, of a one-volume edition of O. Henry's complete works. (T. L. S.)
- (9) Five careful and obviously expert reviews of books of scholarship, from American University Presses. (T. L. S. and N. S.)
- (10) About twenty short reviews of less important fiction, mainly detective or Western stories, of American origin.

And I give you my word, suspect though it may be, that I cannot detect in any one of these, from (1) to (10), any trace of patronizing, or derision, or critical crookedness, or indeed of any of the other tokens of racial self-consciousness which you profess to know about. All your talk of that is simply fantastic—and, I think, objectionable.

Objectionable because, my dear Mr. Nathan, you seem to me to be talking in pure ignorance. Admittedly, you may have cause for temporary or local irritation of some sort. You mention, for instance, the tiresome ways of certain touring English lecturers. Believe me, I know very well how painful a creature the visiting lecturer in the States can be. (I have lived, but never lectured, there myself; and more than once have I felt hot and cold all over at the spectacle of some whippersnapper from London lording it at a luncheon of the New York literati, with his intimate Christian-name talk of the English giants with whom he may or may not have shaken hands.) But tourists—and lecturers are hardly more—are not a fit sample to judge a nation by: as even we over here are slowly beginning to learn. And you ought to know very well that the best-advertised names are not always the most representative.

And when you mention the names of two or three English writers who see this evil thing as clearly as yourself, you only make it clearer still, my dear Mr. Nathan, that your knowledge of literary England is extremely scrappy and haphazard. Your imaginary picture of Messrs. Hugh Walpole, St. John Ervine and J. B. Priestley having "a tough time of it" amongst their colleagues because of their magnificent courage in battling for a cause so thoroughly established as this one, is, as the old saying goes, a subject for Max Beerbohm. . . . And whom are these hard-pressed paladins of young America's literature beset by? Apparently by no fewer than one hundred and two virulent American-baiters, amongst whom the tremendous forms of Arnold Bennett and G. K. Ches-

(Continued on next page)

By
Burton J.
Hendrick

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H. PAGE

Every reader of the Page Letters will enjoy this new volume. In it, Burton J. Hendrick tells the story of Mr. Page's earlier life and career as editor, publisher, and educator, skillfully weaving his incomparable letters into the narrative which is carried up to the war days already described.

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