

ugees, rotting in western European capitals, get some morbid satisfaction in imagining or repeating. They all have the merit of brevity and a certain unconventional strength, a touch unmistakably Russian. But they are too few, too much a collection of, so to say, dots and dashes, to serve as the measure of their author's possibilities in comparison with fuller and more finished work. Mr. Theodore Dreiser's introduction may be taken as only a slightly more ponderous way of saying that it represents a return to the masters of Russia's golden literary age.

Brief Tales

THE SILVER THORN. By HUGH WALPOLE.
New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1928.
\$2.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD CURLE

MR. WALPOLE'S leisurely manner, which requires a large canvas for its sweep, is not at its best in the short story. It is, as it were, inherent in the quality of his art that his great dramatic moments need the background of a long narrative. In short, his particular power as a novelist militates against his complete success as a writer of brief tales.

The criticism is relative, for many an author would feel pleased with himself if he could produce fifteen such stories as compose this volume, but nevertheless the fact remains that Mr. Walpole's remarkable gifts are essentially those of a man who must spread himself. He is the Trollope of this age, a sophisticated Trollope with a modern conception of his calling, and in the very nature of things the short story can only be a sideline to his main activities.

All the same, the stories are well-told, readable, and diversified. Perhaps nobody living excels Mr. Walpole in the ability to be interesting, and it is indeed probable that the chief secret of his popularity lies in this. He is scarcely ever dull: when one reads him either in a novel or a short story, one's attention is immediately caught and firmly held. These tales are a case in point: some of them are quaint, some sentimental, some definitely "queer," but all are interesting. Mr. Walpole is a born story-teller, and that is just as important an asset as being a finished artist in the telling of stories.

Another attractive thing about Mr. Walpole is his vital curiosity about life. His probing mind is always exploring, and the kindly tolerance and understanding of his nature are not afraid even of the dark places. His attitude to existence is extremely sane, but as readers of his novels know—witness "The Green Mirror" and "The Old Ladies"—he is conscious of that corruption or madness which sometimes lies beneath a calm surface and can use it with thrilling effect. It is in this sense of contrast that he rises to his greatest heights, and in "The Silver Thorn," also, his themes are frequently those which show us the trembling edge of insanity in normal lives. Such stories as "The Tiger," "The Tarn," "Major Wilbraham," "The Etching," and "The Enemy" deal with strange psychological states and are almost reminiscent of Mr. H. G. Wells in certain moods.

But Mr. Walpole is rich in imagination and his angles are many. He is touching in "A Silly Old Fool," sardonic in "No Unkindness Intended," charming in "The Little Donkeys with the Crimson Saddles," fanciful in "Ecstasy," and so on. One need not go through the whole list, although, taken all in all, it is perhaps "The Dove," with its suggestion of mounting terror, that is the finest story in the volume.

As to the style, Mr. Walpole is always adequate, seldom impressive. He has a keen perception of arrangement and an easy flow of language, but one could wish that he would tighten things up and be more masterly in his whole presentation. For he can do it when he wants to, and one feels that he is not sufficiently severe with himself. This delightful writer, who has openly declared his joy in the creative life, has surely in him even more memorable work than he has yet given us. One thinks of those dramatic moments of his—in "The Tiger," for instance, when the placid Mr. Mood, fancies that he, too, can smell the animal—and one asks oneself why he should ever sink to the pedestrian. These glimpses of a deeper power need not remain mere glimpses. Mr. Walpole has such ample force in reserve and knows so well, so absolutely well, what is first-rate that one always hopes for a novel that will justify one's inner conviction of what he really could do.

The Man Who Never Died

THIS MAN ADAMS. By SAMUEL MCCOY.
New York: Brentanos. 1928. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS

IF a man is known by the company he keeps what are we to make of this man McCoy? He is supposed to be a 1928 American yet only a few weeks ago he was in the island of Cyprus and found Venus Aphrodite there. Now on a New England farm he runs into John Adams by sheer accident and forms a passionate friendship. That is all I know about him and there is no "Who's Who" handy. But at first blush it is rather a rum couple—Adams and Aphrodite, John and Venus. In the November *Harpers* McCoy cries out "to you, O goddess, this wine of Cyprus" as he pours a "libation to the beautiful Troubler." Perhaps there is the link, for if ever there was a "beautiful Troubler" John Adams was. Indeed he troubled the political and intellectual life of his day with such dæmonic energy that his new friend McCoy considers him to have been one of the few men who in any genuine sense were ever born. And as McCoy looks about today and sees the lasting results of that troubling and considers the intense vitality of old Adams's mind he realizes also that he never died. "Operator," he calls, "have you got that call through yet? We want to speak to Mr. Adams." "John Adams is alive and the men who wrote the school books are dead."

The enormous vitality of the man! That is what impresses McCoy. Adams, he finds, was a "Me man," a possessions man, a "my rights" man, who was filled with an energy more explosive than steam and who "yelled and howled for The Right to Keep What Belongs to You." He finds that "the Yell" is the visible sign of all giants. "You yell for what you want. You keep on yelling. It must be confessed that McCoy yells also. He yells "dammit" and "damn you" and "good God" in a way probably neither of his friends, Adams or Aphrodite, would approve. Venus controlled the greatest source of energy in the world, but she never confused that energy with mere noise. John Adams knew the enormous energies he was directing but he also would never have confused the noise of the whistle with the pressure in the boiler.

Between them, these two friends of McCoy's (I like to consider his article and his book together), control about all the human energy there is in the world. The energy controlled by the woman Venus is blind, unthinking, non-intellectual, but in the long run will probably always be more explosive and powerful than that controlled and directed by John. Adams sought to control the fate of us hundred millions of today by energy of mind, mind applied to the sciences of government and economics. McCoy finds that in our daily lives we are controlled by "this man Adams" and his doings a century and more ago, and that is why it is natural to find him still ready to talk on his New England farm. In fact, McCoy's conception of American history is that in the beginning there was John, nobody else. The others melt down in front of John's burning energy and his new friend's enthusiasm like candles set at a furnace door.

Twenty years before independence was declared by the colonies (I am now rehearsing the gospel according to McCoy), Adams had conceived that thought. He wrote it out in a letter, though the letter seems vague enough when read. In the years before the explosion came, Adams was reading, writing, thinking on the problems of government, on how men could keep and be allowed to keep in peace what was theirs. When the years of confusion came and all ideas were in the melting-pot, ideas of what men were, what property was, what was meant by "yours" and "mine," what was the right to have and to hold, what was the right to grab, what were "rights" themselves, Adams's ideas did not melt. They had been fused and hardened at such a high temperature in his own mind that they could not be melted merely by the heat engendered by a revolution.

The Continental Congress was assembled. Nobody knew exactly what he wanted. Adams did. Little by little he pulled the composite congressional mind this way and that. If only he could have kicked the whole crowd out of doors and gone about the work quietly, reasonably, and alone! But he had to work through others. He wanted a nation to be born. He wanted the word Independence to be spoken. The whole Declaration could have been

made up of words already written by him, but he placed the pen in the hands of Jefferson. Yet the mind of Adams. Words must be backed by force. The nondescript army at Boston must be taken over by Congress. A leader must be appointed. Mind must direct, but a hand must hold a sword. Working still through others, Adams created his general, he made George Washington. Slowly Adams went on, as fast as the slower minds of others would allow. Sea power must be met on the sea. Adams created the navy, as years later when president he created the Navy Department.

The Revolution, as Adams said, was over before the fighting began. It had been a revolution in the minds of men and was complete before the blood was shed, but the fighting had to prove it to a blind world, a blind England. At last the fighting, too, was over. Independence was no longer just a word. It was a fact. But what was to be done with it? There was property to be considered and safeguarded. There would always be property and there would always be those who had it and those who had not, the rich and the poor, the comfortable sheep and the ravening wolves. Adams was busy in Europe. He had been busy "selling the idea" of America to Dutch bankers and other disbelievers. He had to negotiate the treaty of peace with England that signed and sealed and made a fact of that word "independence." A constitution was being drawn up in America so that property would be safe. Adams wrote and wrote. All his life he was writing. This time it was a book. There were various sorts of property in America. There were farms, and government bonds, and factories yet to be. Also there were dangerous ideas about the rights of men who had no property at all to govern those who had. Interests clashed, but at last the instrument was drawn and the votes were cast, and when the constitution was born it was born with the ideas of Adams in its clauses. Many safeguards had been put into it, balance of powers and other devices, but some years went by and it was evident that "interpretation" might alter it and the Supreme Court might undo the work so hardly achieved. Next to the farmers of the instrument, its father for effectiveness was John Marshall, and it was John Adams, as president, who appointed Marshall. The circle was complete. The nation had been conceived; it had been born; it had been recognized by the world; its education was arranged for; its scheme of life was narrowly laid down for it; its guardians, the Supreme Court, were appointed and the character of their decisions settled in advance. The astounding vitality of Adams had given birth to a hundred million people, and he has not died. McCoy has been talking to him on his farm.

But his vitality is waning. The man is getting a bit old. He has not the energy of youth. In 1770, after the Boston Massacre the British soldiers who had fired on the mob were so detested that it was worth any lawyer's practice and perhaps life to stand up and defend them that they might have a fair trial. Adams did not flinch. He (and young Quincy whom McCoy forgets to mention), defended the hated prisoners in the teeth of the excited public opinion of the whole of society. They won. It was hoped recently that Sacco and Vanzetti might have the benefit of "this man Adams's" services but he is, as we have said, getting a bit feeble and did not appear in the case. It was a great pity for he would have had much to say that would have been worth hearing, and he never cared more for the roaring of the frightened mob than a sailor for the wind whistling in the rigging when all scared landlubbers scuttle down below.

Yes, it is a thousand pities the old man is no longer as vigorous as he was. We need him in so many ways. If he never was afraid of the mob neither was he of the over-fed, guzzling capitalists. He had a temper, too, like a West Indian hurricane, which when let loose cut a devastating swathe through the minds of men. Perhaps he may yet speak out and if he does all the voices now heard will seem but the twittering of sparrows at eve. There are many of us who are waiting for him.

Much of all that McCoy tells us of him is true. He does not exalt him too high. The trouble with the picture he draws is that the other figures are made too small. Adams should not be reduced but the rest should be brought up to scale. And fantasy is handled a bit too roughly. It is a very delicate flower which has rarely flourished in American literature and for that reason we are grateful to McCoy for having planted it in his garden but it will never survive if it is treated as though it were a six foot

stalk of Indian corn. That can be trampled in the dirt and it will spring back, but fantasy is too sensitive for that. This idea of what "being born" really means and of a man who never dies must be handled gently. When we read that Adams gave birth to Washington after mature consideration of "just nine and a half months . . . not overly long a gestation" we run quickly to raise the stalk of fantasy from the ground, but find it has been broken and that the sap will run no longer. For Heaven's sake, McCoy, be careful. If you can grow fantasy in 1928 America you will have done a marvellous thing, but remember that we should not drink the "wine peculiar to Cyprus" out of a thick tea-cup like Polack hootch.



A Study in Purple

LE *peuple ému répondit*. To those who have some knowledge of French the meaning of that sentence is clear at a glance. But how if you were a schoolboy and the words were preceded by the stern command, "Translate!"? Recall those days when the French language was a great darkness to you punctuated by a few spots of light, by those words whose meaning you indubitably did know. Think of the torment at examination times when you realized that *some* sense had to be wrested from the passage before you. Remember how your heart would leap up when some meaning—*any* meaning—grew like a faint luminousness upon the night; while if your version seemed actually plausible, if you thought that an examiner could, with good will, discern how that meaning might be supposed to have emerged from the original, ah, then you fairly glowed! For you would get credit for good intentions. If he could not commend you for accuracy, at least he would admire your ingenuity.

If you will perform some such exercise in sympathy you will be prepared to do justice to one boy's rendering. Here it is.

Le peuple ému répondit. "The purple emu laid another egg."

That, mind you, was a lad of parts. It would have been so easy to write, "The purple emu replied." But that would be silly. Emus don't talk. His sense of reality rejected it. Once you have got your emu, "*répondit*" must signify something that can reasonably be attributed to the bird. Well, *pondre* means "to lay an egg," so there you are! But notice the nice feeling for the finer shades shown in "laid *another* egg." He gives full value to the reduplicative prefix. No slovenly workmanship there, but the touch of the genuine scholar. Yes, that boy will get on.

But it is not of his skill or his ingenuity that I would write. It is the wild strain of poetry in him that rouses my interest. What cloudy visions, drawing their substance from what source, were haunting the chambers of his mind when he came to set down those words: The purple emu laid another egg? Memories of emus seen in Zoological Gardens must have mingled with pictures of emus in stories of adventure and books of travel, emus feeding quietly in herds or spurning the dust of Patagonian plains. Museums as well as books doubtless added their contribution, museums in which he had gazed at the strange sombre green eggs of the creatures. And then there entered the picture, charging it with its own magic, a vision that hailed from some uncharted region of the imagination, the vision of a purple emu. And with that the miracle happens. Forgotten are the banal French words, forgotten the confining bonds of time and space, and the literalities of the examination room. The picture takes shape and the thronging images are fused in the deathless line, The purple emu laid another egg.

To a meditative mind there is endless delight in pondering poetic images, in gazing into them ever more deeply and so bringing forth new beauties. As I have brooded lovingly over my schoolboy's immortal line I seem to have stepped into a new world.

At first, and even at second or third, sight, the emu is not a romantic bird. Indeed it hardly deserves the name of bird at all. It cannot fly; it does not sing; its nest is a mere hole in the sand. On the other hand, it has no obvious affinity with normal animals of the wild such as the deer, the lion, the

fox, or the rabbit. Neither beast nor bird, it inhabits an anomalous mid-world. It has all the ungainliness of the ostrich with none of the ostrich's beauty. For the ostrich is white and her plumes are in kings' palaces, but the emu is brown and dowdy, a sort of colossal sparrow. How should one find romance in an emu?

Ah! but there was once an emu, an emu with a difference, an emu set apart, for, by some freak of nature, she was not brown, but purple. Yes, authentic purple! If you had seen her across the plain in the level evening light when the sun's radiance touched her, you would have marvelled at that amethystine glow. Burnished foam was her plumage, and, when she raised her head, bronze and purple lights flashed from her tall neck as from a thousand iridescent sequins. Small wonder that legend grew up about her. Some said that she was of royal, nay of divine, descent; that the founder of her line was a god who had assumed the form of an emu for love of some far-off emu queen. Others made dark allusion to the animal gods of Egypt. Others again would have it that her ancestors were of Tyrian origin, a precious stock that had been bred for royal pageantry and to draw the chariots of Kings through the streets of Tyre.

However that may be, the jeweled creature held herself as one of whom all the legends were true. Proud, imperious, remote, she moved among her brown companions as a being of another race.

Suitors she had in plenty, but she froze them with her Olympian air or parched them with her scorn.

So matters went for some years, years when she drank deep of delights half-queenly, half-divine.

But things could not go on thus indefinitely. The loneliness even of a god becomes after a time tedious, nor is a goddess immune from ennui. And there were not wanting more practical arguments for a change in her way of life. Her subjects might be brown and dull and middle class, but they were numerous and powerful, and their wishes could not for ever be ignored with impunity.

They made clear to her what those wishes were. The purple strain would not be permitted to die out. Her duty was plain. She must have children.

So it came about that she contracted an alliance with an emu in whose plumage the eye of faith could detect tints a little more than brown and less than bronze.

In due time there were eggs. A group of elder emus watched day and night around the hollow in the sand where the royal embryos had been deposited. The emu in repose is a statuesque bird, and the elders looked impressive in their brooding solicitude. At last the eggs cracked and two fluffy forms emerged.

Breathlessly the elders waited during days when the fluff turned to down, the down to feathers. They examined the chicks in every light and from every angle. Then at last they pushed them aside in disgust. Not even the eye of faith could discern a glimmer or reflection of anything but the most ordinary brown.

But hope is a hardy plant; a populace will not be denied; and royalty has its responsibilities. So again there were more eggs, or, to be accurate, an egg. This time excitement ran high. For the fledgling was purple. It had not the rich dye of its mother, to be sure, but that would doubtless come in time. Meanwhile it was sufficiently different in color from all ordinary fledglings to warrant high hopes of a dynasty, to call for public celebrations, and even to evoke prophecy.

But alas! the little newcomer proved a puny creature and within a month it had sickened and died.

I was about to say that it left only a memory. But it did more than that. Unfortunately for its mother, it stimulated exhortations to renewed efforts.

I do not know how many attempts the unhappy Queen made to satisfy the insistent demands of King and subjects. Egg after green egg was laid, and watched over tenderly by solemn congresses, and time after time the dream of a purple offspring was shattered. The Queen began to lose her beauty. The lustre was fading from her feathers. Her spirit grew listless. She no longer walked with her proud free stride. Her subjects became resentful and there were ominous mutterings of discontent. It was rumored that she had fallen out with her husband, whose optimism was as unquenchable (and to her as intolerable) as his ardor.

Somehow they must have patched things up, for there was no open quarrel. There ensued, however,

an interval of four eggless years. To the exhausted and disheartened Queen tranquillity brought strength, and with strength returned something of her former beauty and of her spirited ways.

Encouraged by these signs her undaunted spouse dared one day to re-open the ancient topic.

"Don't you think, my dear," he said, "now you seem so well, we might venture to try just once more? You never can tell, you know . . ."

Sweet Heavens! Was it going to begin all over again!

She flashed at him a vehement No! and the dust of her impetuous flying feet came near to blinding him.

He found her later in what seemed a softer mood, and tried again.

She was adamant.

But he persisted.

Day after day he persisted.

At last his importunity became more exhausting than any egg.

"Just once more, dear," he pleaded, "just this once."

"Oh, very well," she exclaimed wearily.

The purple emu laid another egg.

CHARLES A. BENNETT.

Father to the Man

REVIEW OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S DIARIES OF BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CORINNE ROOSEVELT ROBINSON

ON October 26, 1928, a group of three hundred children, delegates from the Roosevelt Clubs of the Public Schools of New York, gathered in the auditorium of Roosevelt House, 28 East 20th St., the restored birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt, to hear an address by Dr. Frank M. Chapman, the ornithologist.

He took as his theme "Theodore Roosevelt, the man in earnest."

As I listened, I thought of the boyhood diaries of my brother and of the old saying that "the child is father to the man."

The "*boy in earnest*" was indeed the precursor of "the man in earnest," and never was there a more earnest boy than is depicted in these diaries.

What determination is shown by the delicate boy! Many are the entries in the "Diaries" "I was sick," "I was very sick," "I was not well," etc., and yet, dauntlessly, almost the next entry would record "walked nineteen miles with papa" or "I put my hand in a strap that a man had, and began the ascent of the snow-covered Mt. Vesuvius. I soon passed the rest, and left them far behind"—childish, or rather child-like, in his love of pranks and play; keenly observant of every furred and feathered creature; responding in almost ageless emotion to the beauties of nature; tenderly aware of his rare good fortune when he says "Bamie is such a kind sister, and I have such kind parents," or again "I was very sick last night, but mama told me storreys, and was so kind, rubbing me with her delicate fingers"; each and all of these entries prove the reaction of a character already responsive to the "eternal verities."

The eleven years old boy is homesick for the land he loved—"I thought," he says, "of picking nuts in the morning wind, and having such a happy time at home, and learning natural history from Nature." "Home," the loadstar always of Theodore Roosevelt's life, America, to which he gave his unswerving devotion! As the author of the "Diaries" grows older, his taste for Natural History assumes more definite form, and by the age of fourteen, when in Egypt, he shows himself the collector, scientist, and would-be explorer; again the "child, father to the man," and later in the Adirondack Mountains his scientific pursuits become an obsession. He never loses, however, the love of fun, of nature as poetry apart from specimens, and never the tender and intimate response to the beautiful family life, by which he was surrounded. In the book called "Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to his Children" (twin book and fitly so to the "Diaries" of his own boyhood and youth) he repays to his children the wisdom, justice, and love, lavished on him by rare and comprehending parents.

These "Diaries" of the youth of a man, who became a world figure, are not only fascinating in themselves, but they bring to us again what their author later so ardently urged upon us, courage, gentleness, and honor, love of home and country.