

and the Fly," poems by such poets of the past as Browning, Tennyson, Blake, Wordsworth, Longfellow, and Lowell, and by such modern poets as Frost, Maschfield, W. H. Davies, Lizette Reese, Carl Sandburg, Louis Untermeyer, and others. Hilda Conkling, a younger child herself when she began writing poetry, is represented, and we are glad to find selections from Elizabeth Madox Roberts's one book of poems, "Under the Tree," as beautifully accurate a transcription of the thoughts of the dreamy child as we have had in recent years. Many verses by unknown or very little known writers are worthy of note. Occasionally some selection strikes us as rather over the head of the small auditor, but such instances are rare. In general this little book is well adapted to its audience and though some of the trifles may strike a grown-up as silly, there are enough prime ingredients in this mixture to justify it. There are some supposed raisins that turn out to be pebbles, on which we grit our teeth. "A Creed," by Edgar A. Guest, in the section entitled "Patriotic" is such a one. But fortunately this section is brief, and so is Mr. Guest's "poem." The section "Days We Celebrate" reminds us too strongly of certain awful class-room exercises. With these necessary exceptions taken, "Recitations for Younger Children" may be given a clean bill of health. It contains much that one can read to the smaller ones without the blush of shame for its banality, even when it is nursery rhyme.

SONGS FOR MICHAEL. By Fred E. Weatherly. Longmans, Green. \$1.75.

CHILDREN'S THEATRES AND PLAYS. By Constance D'Arcy Mackay. Appleton. \$3.50.

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH. By Padraic Colum. Macmillan. \$1.75.

Miscellaneous

CHINESE RECIPES. By NELLIE C. WONG. N. C. Wong, 1226 Amsterdam Avenue, New York City. 1928.

Those many habitués of Chinese restaurants who find delectable the dishes there served will find the recipes for some of them in this gay little orange bound booklet. Miss Wong has gathered together some of the dishes most likely to prove popular, dishes, moreover, which have the added advantage of presenting no difficulty in the way of obtaining the ingredients they contain. Her pamphlet should prove attractive to the housekeeper looking for food to serve that is out of the usual dietary.

THE HOUSEHOLD DICTIONARY. By WINIFRED S. FALES. Dodd, Mead. \$1.50.

All women have had the experience of making mental notes on odds and ends of useful information tucked away into the women's pages of the daily papers or embedded in monthlies or household manuals and then finding themselves completely at a loss as to how to find again such instruction on the steaming of velvet, removing of grass stains, or cognate subjects. Miss Fales has gathered these data together into a volume which lists its items alphabetically, and supplies cross references where they are necessary. In addition to its concise instructions on household matters her book contains tables of standards, weights and measures, and directions for the treatment of accidents. It is a useful compendium.

MODES AND MANNERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. By OSKAR FISCHER and MAX VON BOEHN. Vol. IV. Dutton. 1927. \$5.

This latest volume of a fascinating commentary upon the taste and customs of society is like its predecessors composed of a pictorial representation of fashions with an accompanying narrative which supplies a background of history to illuminate its numerous handsome plates. The authors have derived their material from pictures and engravings of the period covered, 1790-1914, drawing upon fashion magazines, cartoons, paintings, and photographs; their text they have enlivened with quotation and allusion, and with a running explanation of the forces that influenced styles. Their volume is one which the serious student of history as well as the lover of human foibles and inconsistencies will rejoice to own.

MYSTERIES OF THE MISSING. By EDWARD H. SMITH. Dial. 1927. \$3.50.

In writing this book Mr. Smith imposed on himself two handicaps. The first of these was in the selection of material: only famous disappearances were included. Unfortunately, those mysteries which attract the most attention are not always—nor, with such exceptions as the Charlie Ross affair, even usually—the most interesting. There have been, for instance, many disappearances far more puzzling, more fascinating, than either Ambrose Bierce's or Doctor André's. Bierce, no longer young, went to Mexico

in 1913 for a final taste of war, either as correspondent or soldier, and was never heard of again. Doctor André set out for the north pole in a balloon, in 1897, and was never heard of again. Well, "missing" by itself, is a word but feebly connotative of mystery in war and aviation: it is simply a hazard of the two trades.

The second of Mr. Smith's self-imposed handicaps is stated in his preface: "Neither have I attempted any technical exploration of the conduct and motives of vanishers and kidnappers. It must be sufficiently clear that a man unpursued who flees and hides is out of tune with his environment, ill adjusted, nervously unwell. Nor need we accent again the fact that all criminals, kidnappers included, are creatures of disease or defect." Granting that a vanisher may have been out of step with his environment, and that a kidnapper may have been a creature of disease or defect, one still wonders how it is possible to write intelligibly about them without investigating their conduct and motives. The answer seems to be that it isn't possible. Dorothy Arnold and Ambrose Small apparently were voluntary vanishers. Mr. Smith gives each a chapter, but he will have nothing to do with any exploration of their conduct and motives, and so the chapters come to nothing.

This same lack of inquisitiveness allows the kidnapping chapters—one apiece is given to Charlie Ross, John Conway, Marion Clarke, Eddie Cudahy, Willie Whitla, Willie McCormick, and Joe Varotta—to take on a common character, to become merged in the readers' mind so that they can hardly be remembered apart. Superficially, kidnappings are pretty much all alike, or, at least, have many conspicuous features in common: the distinguishing features are usually, unfortunately for Mr. Smith, matters of conduct and motive.

Yet "Mysteries of the Missing" is an honest book: even when relating mysteries that are not mysteries it indulges in no sleight-of-hand, but sticks to the available facts and their accepted interpretations. A sprinkling of guesses would have made it a more exciting book.

Pamphlets

MR. JUSTICE HOLMES AND THE CONSTITUTION. By Felix Frankfurter. Dunster House Bookshop.

JAMES WARD. Oxford University Press. 35 cents.

THE SAGA AND THE MYTH OF SIR THOMAS MORE. By R. W. Chambers. Oxford University Press. 85 cents.

Philosophy

THE KINGDOM OF THE MIND. By Jane E. Downey. Macmillan. \$2.

ETHICAL STUDIES. By F. H. Bradley. Second Edition. Oxford University Press. \$5.

DIALECTIC. By Mortimer J. Adler. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.50.

POSSIBILITY. By Scott Buchanan. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.50.

Poetry

PICTURES. An Unpublished Poem of Walt Whitman. With an Introduction and Notes by EMORY HOLLOWAY. New York: The June House. 1927. \$4.

The text of this poem with the comment upon it is reprinted, with slight changes, from the *Southwest Review*, where it originally appeared. This small volume, beautifully printed, is an item chiefly of interest to collectors and rare-bookmen.

WILLIE LAMBERTON. By ELIZABETH MANNING. Macmillan. 1927. \$1.25.

This is a simple and lucid bucolic narrative, a story that would have interested both Tennyson and the late Thomas Hardy. It reconstructs one of the minor tragedies of the English countryside in a narrative verse that is flexible and moving. It achieves a quiet distinction. Elizabeth Manning's is a new name in contemporary poetry, but her sustaining of her story and her unassuming mastery of her medium are sure to be recognized. The manner fits the matter as glove fits hand. There is no extraordinary scintillation but emotion is stirred. A minor achievement of much merit.

WINGED VICTORY. By BENJAMIN R. C. LOW. New York: William Edwin Rudge. 1927.

A new example of the excellence of the Rudge printing and bookmaking, this slim volume leaves something to be desired as poetry. Mr. Low has done creditable things in verse heretofore. In "Winged Victory" he preserves a delicate touch and strikes out an occasional phrase and image of unusual beauty, but the major inception of each separate stanza, often reminiscent of Swinburne, sinks quickly into the minor and seems hobbled by the sudden full stop of the short ending line. Again, though Mr. Low can rise fierily high in his phraseology he can also indulge himself in twisted crudities of

language. His flight is extremely uneven. Yet, to change the figure, there is ever and again the glitter of the true precious metal in this thin vein of ore.

KANAKA MOON. By CLIFFORD GESSLER. Dodd, Mead. 1927. \$2.

The chief interest in this volume of poems lies in the locale that inspired them, Hawaii. Mr. Gessler is a resident of the islands. He is fairly accomplished. He familiarizes us through his verse with many aspects of Honolulu and its outposts. But beyond this there is little to comment upon in the book. Its descriptions are well enough, but no more.

THE POEMS AND LETTERS OF ANDREW MARVELL. Edited by H. M. MARGOLIOUTH. Oxford University Press. 1927. \$11.50.

Here for the first time we have in two beautifully printed volumes a scholarly critical text of the Poems of Marvell, with elucidating commentary, and a volume of Letters printed chiefly from Marvell's autograph. Many of the letters have never appeared before. "Both Satires and Letters," remark the publishers, "are of first-rate importance for the historian as well as for the literary student and the biographer,"—a statement which cannot be gainsaid. Marvell was of Yorkshire, and we have in his poems a lovely presentation of the Yorkshire scene, in his letters an interesting description of seventeenth century Yorkshire affairs. Professor Margoliouth undertook this edition thirteen years ago. "It has been delayed," he states, "by many causes, of which the war was chief."

Marvell's "an Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," his "The Garden," "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Faun," and "Bermudas" are favorites of all lovers of English verse. He was a poet who both tutored Cromwell's ward, William Dutton, and assisted Milton in the Latin secretaryship. He was a keen satirist of Charles the Second and the Stuarts. It is to be doubted whether others than historians will find of overmuch pith his letters to the Mayor and Corporation of Kingston-Upon-Hull, which occupy 236 pages in the second volume here presented, but such things as his remarks to Milton (in the *Miscellaneous Letters*) upon Milton's "Defensio Secunda" written in Latin,—as well as the general style of his private correspondence,—have much charm.

All students of Cromwellian literature will be impelled to possess these volumes. It is as a poet out of space and out of time that Marvell lives; but he was also busied in the affairs of his period and adds certain important footnotes to the events of a stirring epoch.

A PERSIAN ANTHOLOGY. Translated by EDWARD GRANVILLE BROWNE. Dutton. 1927. \$1.90.

The late Professor E. G. Browne, of Cambridge, was probably the greatest Persian scholar of his time. These epic lyrical, mystical, moral, and narrative selections from Persian poetry are chosen from among his many translations. The small pocket volume bears also an introductory memoir on Browne by J. B. Atkins, and a note on Persian poetry by E. Denison Ross. It is in Dutton's "Wisdom of the East" series. The memoir introduces us to a delightful as well as a distinguished personality. The poems have been chosen to please the general reader and "to furnish examples of all the styles of Persian poetry." The volume may be heartily recommended as a postern gate into a rich Oriental domain.

THE SEARCH. By JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI. Boni & Liveright. 1927. \$1.25.

A slim volume of poetry expounding the mysticism of the East in the words of one who came out of Southern India, from Adyar, to be exact, the center of Theosophy, to enlighten the Western World. This is a religious book by a savior of thought whom Mrs. Besant has sponsored. To the layman, untouched by Theosophy, the ejaculations are somewhat thin and prosy—this is preaching, not poetry—and the language in which the teaching is delivered is uninspired from the point of view of the poet.

Travel

ASIA MINOR IN RUINS. By SATURNINO XIMENEZ. Translated by Arthur Chambers. Bretano's. 1927.

Alas, love alone will not make a statue live, and Pygmalion's secret, we suspect, lay more in the skill of his hands than in the fervor of his prayers or the magic of his kiss. Were this not so, it is hardly possible that Asia Minor should have refused to stir under the painstaking pen of Mr. Ximenez. We know of his enthusiasm—when we read of it in the introduction; but the text itself is so clogged with miscellaneous learning, so wanting in selection, plan or proportion, that for a moment a humorous picture of

(Continued on page 602)



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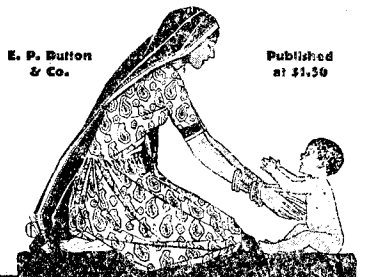
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Points of View

Concerning "Critiquins"

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

I have just seen the splendid essay "Behold the Critiquins," by Archibald MacLeish (by the way, who is he?) in the January 21st issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature*. There are some sentences and paragraphs in it that are really excellent criticism, some that are charming writing, and a few that are both. I must congratulate you on having obtained so intelligent—and in the few places where it sags in intelligence, it makes up in vigor—so intelligent an appraisal of the monsters who currently populate the literary scene. Sincere, however, as is my admiration for his paradoxically condescending defiance to what he calls gods, windmills, idiots, matadors, mannequins, "critiquins," and everything but book reviewers, I confess that I do not think I should normally come to this point of articulateness, were it not that it has been my privilege to arrest the erratic progress of several of his dornicks.

I hasten to lift myself now from the anonymity under which he notices me as "the person entrusted with the chic of the book column in a recent number of one of the most widely tabled of the couturier magazines." (My name and the exact rôle that makes me eligible for his attention will be found affixed to the bottom of this letter.)

Putting aside the undoubted zest of the writing, he has indeed for his major premise a point to make, not a very profound or important point but a fair enough point with which no one can disagree, which he belabors with winning indignation for some four thousand words, i. e., that most critics are brutes or fools or both at once. Who will deny that most contemporary critics are fools, that they shrill through their hats or adumbrate through their shoes without knowledge, tradition, or sense, who will deny the overwhelmingly obvious? Who, on the other hand, will bother to affirm it? The answer to the last is, of course: Mr. MacLeish.

And how he affirms it! Since critical method is a prime concern with him, it is relevant to point out that his method is as impressionistic, as bitterly personal, as vaguely generalizing as that of the worst of those he is scourging. But, after all, the critical method is reserved for works in art, and critics are a purely human phenomenon, and calling a fool a fool is the first and easiest phase in repartee. But it is when he makes the point that critics are brutes, again for the sake of the record belaboring the obvious but without any abatement of heroic scorn, that I, for the sake of the record, hasten to belabor it some more, to see where it will bring us. Such a rehearsal of axioms on my part would be generally insulting, were it not that Mr. MacLeish has blandly, boyishly, subtly (subtly in your eye) bewildered, ignored, and perverted them.

It is thus with something of Boy Scout self-righteousness and a little sorrow at having to dispel his trust in Santa Claus that I break the news to him that criticism is intrinsically and inevitably and by definition brutal, now and forever. Mr. MacLeish would have been just as unhappy in the time of Alexander Pope or Voltaire or Swift as he is today—nay, more unhappy. Most of the beautiful and naïve efforts that he defends so touchingly, with such a Venus-like gesture, would have been destroyed, rather, far more absolutely in any other day, not so hastily and flippantly, but with cruel courtesy, with terrible scrupulousness. A naïve sincerity of intention is not all that is necessary, unfortunately, to a work of art. Greenwich Village still pullulates with a thousand naïve sincerities. Nor, unfortunately, do most critics reflect as they read a very bad book, "This is this man's heart's blood, a precious and sacred thing." Mr. MacLeish assails the intrusion of personalities into criticism (although I do not remember more than three instances of it in all my reading of reviews); let him accept his own dictum—literary abuse of personalities is far less ignoble than special pleading for personalities; let him acknowledge that criticism is cold-blooded, impersonal, and the very devil on the creative artist. By word and implication he does not accept that and that is doubtless a flaw in his thinking and gives a falsifying accent to his comments. But Mr. MacLeish is a very sensitive man.

Now, when I had read through some four thousand words of rollicking abuse of as many sincere and hardworking fellows (though perhaps not so sincere and hard-

working as Mr. MacLeish) I arrived at a definition of what I believe is the minor premise and conclusion of his syllogism, his self-justification, and his assumption of the barber's bowl of Quixote. (Although Mr. MacLeish in your paid columns diffuses my remarks to double-length by the device of indirect quotation, I imagine that I have not the same liberty. I therefore, with his unasked permission, quote directly.) He writes: "For its (Couturier Criticism's)"—what superb phrase-making is this!—"inevitable effect is to deprive all writing of value and put it at the level of the things a smart woman ought to know. And that destruction of value poisons the art itself at its springs. It corrupts the artist's mind. . . . No writer over twenty makes a book without having in his head as he does so a picture of the public it will have to face. He does not write for that public but neither does he write without it. . . . And courageous, selfless, devoted, though a man may be, the foreknowledge that whatever he writes will be passed under the tongues and forefingers of persons who will see in it no more than an occasion for their own cleverness, or an excuse for their intimate attentions to himself, cannot help but irritate and distort the all too present self-consciousness which is the sickness corrupting the work of my generation. . . ."

Whereupon I turned the page, passing out of these irascible gases and into Christopher Morley's appreciation of Thomas Hardy. At once my eye fell upon the following, in such curious juxtaposition to the above: "Someone is sure to reiterate the old legend that it was pique or deep indignation at fool criticisms that turned Hardy from the novel to poetry. That seems to me inconceivable. A man of his vitality and toughness writes as and how he pleases; and the sequence of a man's work obeys laws deeper than publicity." I think that for all time and for all purposes we may take this as the more reasonable approach to important men and important work. (As to unimportant men and unimportant work, let us see later.) But, of course, here we are away from the Battle of the Pygmies. Mr. MacLeish is defending pygmies against the assaults of pygmies. One wonders how much that defense is needed or appreciated by Thomas Mann, Robinson Jeffers, T. E. Lawrence, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis; what Marcel Proust in his padded room would have thought about it.

All this impinges so closely upon the whole matter of art and genius, the function of the artist and the integrity of genius, that his omission of any definition of his position leaves one for a time in some bewilderment, but a bewilderment that proves to have been flattering to him. It grows painfully evident that he was impregnated at an early age with most of those notions usually dismissed as "arty"—that genius is always obscure, that the function of the artist is anything but to entertain, etc., etc., with a professional chumminess that leads him to speak of "us artists." He writes: "There is a group of persons writing to show *The Literature Business* is not an enemy but indeed the all and whole of their lives, the cause, means, and end of their writing." With one's own definition of the "Literature Business" this describes very neatly such writers as Katherine Mansfield, who was an artist first and a human being afterward, but it does indeed exclude such muscular spirits as Shakespeare, who were persons first and incidentally did their day's work as well as they could. But let us read the next sentence: "These are the novelists and poets who produce not novels and poems but public entertainment in paper and print as a producer produces a musical comedy—with very similar materials and usually with comparable rewards," and Shakespeare himself gets his ticket to the Literature Business, working as he did with the most banal of borrowed plots and getting the current market price for his commodity. I confess that I prefer the hacks of the Literature Business to the poseurs and bleeding hearts of Mr. MacLeish's Literature Profession.

Perhaps his special pleadings, like those of the men and women who argue against capital punishment without asking the murderers to abolish it first, are a little sentimental and misguided. Even so, he may plead for whom he wishes; but the absolute dimensions of his case certainly have not the importance he wishes to attach to them.

But let us pass that by and take up instead, for its own sake, his rather unimportant point of the present decline of

criticism. In the first place, there are in America some very good critics, probably about as many and almost as good as at any other time. (I hasten to insert that I make not the remotest pretensions to being a critic at all—I am a book reviewer and I write parodies, too.)

In the second place, these critics become bad critics if they pay very much attention to the sensitiveness of the authors: their allegiance is to something as close as they can come to Absolute Truth. Of course, we book reviewers haven't the space or the liberty to salute Absolute Truth. It's unfortunate, but it's the fact: we can only state reactions as amusingly, briefly, and impressionistically as possible—that is our job, and if we are loyal to our convictions, however wrong and shallow they may be, our integrity is intact. We write labels, catchwords, that may be used by our various reading publics to simplify their choice of entertainments. When Mr. MacLeish proves ponderously that this is not criticism, he is wasting his time. Who could ever imaginably have said it was?

Mr. MacLeish may indeed be an idealist, a pure spirit the unflinching truthfulness of whose perceptions corrodes him with bitterness, horror, and a passion for the clear light of a simpler day, but there are blind spots in his awareness of the literary horizons. Perhaps, like Katherine Mansfield's, his past has been so harrowing that he dare not look too closely upon it. Mr. MacLeish, it is charitable to say, is soft. Windmills he calls them, these atrocities against which he impotently rides. And windmills they are, that grind out his flour. The Literature Business: the writers, the publishers, the overhead, the booksellers, ten thousand published books a year, and who the hell is going to buy them? Does he believe that over 100 of these are worth reviewing seriously, applying his own absolute and eternal critical values? (100 is the highest estimate ever given.) Does he believe that the machinery of critical notice has maws big enough even to receive them all? Does he believe that publishers care whether they are gravely, conscientiously, severely criticized? (We are not discussing now a matter of art, we are discussing a matter of business.) This infinitely ramified machine is geared to accommodate business properties, publishing ventures like any other business ventures, upon which business men have gambled money. Writers, publishers and booksellers want, then, not criticism, they want advertising slogans. The critics may once have attempted to swallow this tide, as Thor the ocean through the horn of the Giants. It strangled them; they became, in turn, desperate, cynical, resigned. They have with some remnant of self-respect refused to admit that their profession is to invent advertising slogans, they have tried to retain at least the patter of criticism, but they have admitted to themselves quite frankly that their real function ceases with telling the customers the nature of a certain commodity. This is of course as far from criticism as the art of writing stock reports. In a last outraged convulsion of horror at their debased estate, therefore, some of the reviewers (as we shall call them henceforth) reached the last stage of cynicism and became flippant, arrogant, superficial, like post-war Grand Dukes despoiled of their titles, lands, and families, to whom remained only the privilege of being insulting. In a hierarchy where nothing is important, why not amuse themselves? Where there is nothing worth talking about, why not talk about themselves? And so the poor dear hurt brutes crawl off and smile though their hearts are breaking.

The above dramatization of a business evolution is naturally considerably more romantic than the fact. But Mr. MacLeish brings the same callousness and superficiality and ignorance to the consideration of the Gethsemane of the reviewers that he accuses the reviewers of giving the Gethsemane-transfigured artists. He seems proud of his inability to accept the inevitable, as the reviewers have done. He reminds one of those unfortunates who put their right hand between the fourth and fifth buttons of their waistcoats and declaim that they are Napoleon. They are usually confined in the nearest sanitarium, with all possible pity but with some amusement. Such a confinement, however, would be too much

(Continued on next page)