

the automobile manufacturers, it advertises 25 per cent more power, a subject with all the accessories, and so many gears and levers that the meanest intelligence can ride in it.

Or, to reduce all this to literary terms, here is a new romanticism which has run off with the realist's baggage. If you want classicism, look at Miss Cather's "Death Comes for the Archbishop." Miss Hurst's Bek and Henry are as humanly conceived as the two saints and heroes of that apparently simple chronicle. But Miss Cather's book is thrice-born, Miss Hurst's only twice. By which I mean that the huddled mass of detail which is life in the rough has yielded to the more imaginative writer characters and an idea (that is once), and these she has seen living in a story (that is twice), and that story has shed its excrescences, arranged itself by the logic of thought and the inner necessity of personal development, been stripped of its inessentials by the restraint of a disciplined imagination, and raised above artifice into art. Whereas Miss Hurst, with her acute observation, and her sympathy with a new and valid American civilization, has stopped short of the final effort which lifts the work clear and clean out of its encumbering realisms and cruder purposes, being content instead to use every mechanical device to make vivid, inescapable, and often tiresome the mass of circumstance which her method of an inquiring reporter has assembled for her book. And so does Sinclair Lewis, and so did John dos Passos in "Manhattan Transfer," and so does Theodore Dreiser, and so does Sherwood Anderson often to the destruction of his fine mystic insights. It is the kind of romantic expansiveness, vigorous, slovenly, tricky in its effects, and verbose against which we must oppose the classic ideal of refinement and perfection if we are to get much further with the new fiction of the industrial age.

Indeed this method, which advertising writers have consummated with their type displays, slogans, homely detail, and focus upon buyers' resistance, is fatal to fiction. It can prevent such good material as Miss Hurst's from catching fire. It can pervert its meaning by a false emphasis. It can corrupt the idea of style, which is not a trick, or a savory, or a punching machine, but the close-fitting garment of imagination.

The naturalist-romanticists have gone too far with their high-pressure salesmanship methods. They can sell us one family dinner but not half a dozen, one fine character once but not again and again with the same specifications on every other page, one apt adjective or adverb, but not twelve in a row. We want hand work, not machine multiplication. If a journalist cannot give us that, a novelist should. We want stories that are finished, not materials for a story grouped by pots and pans, chairs and sofas, books and bric-a-brac, like a country auction. Even the automobile manufacturers whose standardized products bear so close a resemblance to the short stories, the "features," and the concocted novels of the journalists, have become classicists by comparison. They have to meet large demand by factory production, and yet contrast the cars they turn out, each part indispensable and all harmonious, with the clumsy incoherence of cogs, levers, and wagon bodies which we had ten years ago—or with the sprawling naturalistic novel.

✱ ✱ ✱

Perhaps David did become President. That is not the real point of this book, although it is its selling point. The heart of this book is the Schuyler family as an imaginative interpretation (not merely a representation) of Illinois, America. And if Miss Hurst has failed to realize her own high ideal it is because, by punch, push, repetition, even footnotes that tell you what to believe, she has turned a good novel into the feature story of the making of a President. That it still remains a considerable story not to be missed in the season's reading, is proof that the worst of methods cannot keep down such characters as David and Henry and Bek.

"Anatole France's brain," says *John O'London's Weekly*, "has been removed and weighed by experts. It weighs only thirty-six ounces as against forty-eight ounces, the weight of the average brain, but the experts say that what the brain lacked in weight it had in quality."

The centenary of Jules Verne will be observed at Nantes, his natal town, on February 8.

Unconventional History

AMERICA. By HENDRIK VAN LOON. Illustrated by the author in color and in black and white. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1927. \$5.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. VAN LOON'S numerous illustrations precisely harmonize with his four hundred and fifty pages of text. These illustrations are broad cartoons, often eccentric in design, always inaccurate in detail, and sometimes quite meaningless, but occasionally strangely effective in impressing a new fact or idea upon the reader. Nothing could be better, for example, than his picture of "our inheritance from the past"—a man dragging a cart filled with cannon, temples, gallows, books, castles, ships, and so on; or his depiction of the perils of the frontier—a skull with an arrow through the eyehole; or his portrait of America's most valuable ally in the Revolution, "General Wilderness"—a morass with a tangled thicket of woods above it. Other pictures are merely decorative. Some are perfectly vacuous. The general effect is of raggedness, eccentricity, and crudity, but of provocative unconventionality and boldness.

So it is with the text. Nobody will buy this book to obtain a complete and accurate factual account of American history, and it would be unfair to point out how Mr. Van Loon over-emphasizes certain subjects, how he leaves great gaps here and



HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON

there, and how he has misstated some facts and misdated some events. He aims at the broader effects. His book is intended to give a highly personal view of the general evolution of American civilization. In part, Mr. Van Loon emphasizes his independence by being slangy, over-popular, and aggressively irreverent. He writes of how Lord North was "bawled out," he quotes Rube Goldberg upon liberty, and he talks of Monroe knowing the advantage of a good poker-face. In part, he attempts, none too successfully, a Chestertonian inversion of old interpretations, as when he tells us that Andrew Jackson was a thorough conservative. But in large degree he achieves his goal by decidedly more creditable means. Thus in his narrative he emphasizes the importance of ideas, from Calvin to Rousseau and from Tom Paine to Wilson. Next to this, he emphasizes economic forces and motives. It is significant that the locomotive and the steamboat get a chapter that is about as long as the treatment of the entire Civil War.

Doubtless Mr. Van Loon would like to pose as an extremely hard-boiled realist in his attitude toward history; a writer absolutely merciless in his treatment of sham, myth, and false estimates. The fact, on the contrary, is that he is a complete romantic in his attitude toward the long and varicolored history of the American people. He views it as a great adventure, and under his pen some of its phases—the chapters on "New Zion at Twenty Below Zero" and on "Thomas Jefferson and the Emperor Napoleon" are good examples—become even more romantic than in the old style histories. He loves to turn out of his way for a fine, dashing episode like that of the Emperor Maximilian, who is treated under the characteristic heading "The Last of the Conquistadores," and even his paragraph berating the white Anglo-Saxon for his cruel and rapacious treatment of the Indians is set in a chapter again characteristically headed, "A Golden Spike Is Driven in Utah." We suspect that one reason why practically nothing is said in this book about American history between 1875 and 1900 is that it

appeared a little drab to the author. Writing in this broad, headlong, colorful fashion—writing with marked sincerity and earnestness—he has produced a book which, while negligible for the purposes of all real students of the subject, should be of decided value and interest to great numbers of those who come under the heading of general readers; and especially to those who like plenty of ideas intermixed with their facts, and who welcome even bizarre ideas as adding a certain spice.

The Play of the Week

By OLIVER M. SAYLER

BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM—A Tragedy in Three Acts. By GEORGE KELLY. Produced by ROSALIE STEWART at the Cort Theatre, New York, December 26, 1927.

Reviewed from Performance and Manuscript

NO phase of artistic expression is abler than the theatre to embody the esthetic and ethical standards of its time and to do so in the prevailing psychological terminology. Dependent on instantaneous popular response, the pulse of the theatre must beat tempo with that of its public. Old themes may live again in the moulds of today. Themes of today may be poured successfully into the patterns of the past. Content and form may both be contemporary. In any case, there must be this link of today with today.

George Kelly has chosen the link of treatment rather than that of subject in his latest play, "Behold, the Bridegroom—." Boldly and skilfully, he has wrought that composite of then and now. The measure of his boldness lies in the hoary age of his theme, for, pared to the bone, it is the venerable old skeleton of the days of "East Lynne"—pining hearts and unrequited love. The measure of his skill lies in the plausibility and present significance with which he has been able to invest the process of dying for romantic love by enlisting the aid of the secret keys of modern psychiatry.

If our great-grandfathers had kept vital statistics with as much pretentious and painstaking care as we make a show of doing today, I have no doubt that feminine mortality for this cause would have presented a formidable figure. Obsessed with the theme as the dramatic and narrative literature of the period was, there must have been some foundation, some corresponding obsession, in life. Literature feeds on life more than life on literature. Besides, we know for a fact that the constrained, custom-curbed life of our great-grandmothers inevitably set the stage for just such emotional tragedies in the case of tense and super-sensitive young women. The régime itself made for an abnormal proportion of tense and super-sensitive young women. And when love and marriage were such a girl's only prospective professions, failure in them had consequences comparable in finality with the rigor of the constricting taboos.

Latterly, we have prided ourselves on recovery from this abnormal balance in life forces. And on the disappearance of repining as an impelling motive in our arts. Certainly it has thus disappeared from the novel and the drama. And certainly, with the coming of economic and professional freedom for women, it has dwindled from its dominant position in life. But Kelly rises from the bourgeois preoccupations of his previous plays to tell us that in more idle and still tradition-bound strata of our life today the phenomenon persists. And if we have devised cures for the ill, that is not to say that the ill no longer recurs. In other words, Kelly insists that there are still such young women as Tony Lyle among "our betters." And he hopes, with some ground for hope, that there are many more who will sympathize with her—among ourselves as well as "our betters."

Sensing thus a spark of life in a generally discarded theme, Kelly has not been satisfied to bring it before us in the florid emotional accoutrements of its elder literary and dramatic incarnation. Recognition of the fact in those days was sufficient. Sentimental exaggeration of the fact was in vogue. Our great-grandfathers were not realistically or causally inquisitive. Meanwhile, however, we have developed not only a greater curiosity, a consuming curiosity, with reference to the motivation of human actions, but also an elaborate and scientifically accurate body of knowledge and experience, gained by trial and error, wherewith to satisfy that curiosity. It is in terms of this newer psychology, therefore, that Kelly has expressed his tragedy of unrequited love. That we frequently neglect to

apply what we know to the prevention and cure of such tragedies is the specific point of this bitter, relentless, disillusioning, and yet always tenderly wrought, play.

It is in the writing of the scene in which this point is explicitly made that Kelly betrays the cross-purposes that have always trailed his efforts as a playwright. There are artists whose left hands constantly fight their right. George Kelly is one of them. Although he belongs unquestionably to the small group of four or five native playwrights who show promise of challenging O'Neill's priority, he has yet to write a play in which these contradictory forces are not at war. As accurately as I can analyze the evidence, it is a case of Kelly under-rating the intelligence and perspicacity of his audience. He seems to be in dread that his motive will not be plain. Having made his point, therefore, in the subtle, unobtrusive, self-effacing manner of the true artist, he mounts the platform, waves his hands, and otherwise deports himself unbecomingly to the artist he essentially is.

In "The Show-Off," Kelly's first play to disclose definite promise and assurance of his unusual gifts, this distrust of his audience took the form of exaggeration. The comedy of Aubrey Piper and his family, for all its pungent and racy truth, was written throughout in italics, underscored and in red ink. Possibly its success in large degree was due to that fact. But Kelly was not deliberately writing down to the risibilities of his audience. Rather, he was shouting at the top of his voice and in dead earnest, for fear he would not be heard. To prove his point in "Craig's Wife," he went to the extent of actual distortion of his leading character, thus failing, in the eyes of the discriminating, to prove it at all.

In "Behold, the Bridegroom—," the author succeeds for two acts in keeping this besetting temptation in control, only to yield summarily, and as disappointingly as ever before, in the first twenty minutes of the last act. Only a dramatist who took himself too seriously or his audience too lightly would have deceived himself into thinking that he was writing drama when he composed the psychological chart of this colloquy between Tony's doctors. George Kelly knows life. He knows the theatre. He has yet to know himself.

(Mr. Saylor will review next week the four intimate productions in Max Reinhardt's German Repertory Season, including "Periphery," by Langer; "Servant of Two Masters," by Goldoni; "Love and Intrigue," by Schiller; and "The Living Corpse" ["Redemption"], by Tolstoy.)

PLAYS OF THE SEASON Still Running in New York

BURLESQUE. By Arthur Hopkins and George Manker Watters. Plymouth Theatre. The personal equation beneath pink tights and putty nose.

THE GOOD HOPE. By Herman Heijermans. Civic Repertory Theatre. A European repertory veteran ably revived on our only repertory stage.

PORGY. By Dorothy and DuBose Heywood. Republic Theatre. The rhythms of Negro life interpreted in pulsing drama.

ESCAPE. By John Galsworthy. Booth Theatre. Leslie Howard et al. in the dramatist's latest—and last—play.

THE IVORY DOOR. By A. A. Milne. Charles Hopkins Theatre. An ironic and whimsical fairy tale for grown-ups.

AND SO TO BED. By J. B. Fagan. Bijou Theatre. A satiric and pungent comedy based on a presumable day in the amorous life of Samuel Pepys, Esq.

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA. By Bernard Shaw. Guild Theatre. A debated and debating play set squarely on its feet at last by sound acting and discerning direction.

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS. By Sean O'Casey. Hudson Theatre. The Irish Players lift the curtain on a Dublin tenement under the rebellion.

PARIS BOUND. By Philip Barry. Music Box. A young American playwright comes into his own with a triumph of the casual.

THE ROYAL FAMILY. By George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber. Selywn Theatre. A wise, witty, and tender comedy of the actor at home—back of "back stage."

Town-Pump Policy

IMMIGRATION CROSSROADS. By CONSTANTINE PANUNZIO. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN PALMER GAVITT

TO anyone with considerable experience in contact with foreign-born groups and individuals in America, especially if he has given appreciable study to the general aspects of the question, our immigration policy is charged with tragedy. So charged whether viewed with regard to its reactions upon our international relations and the esteem of the world; upon large portions of our population and the public unity and morale; or

upon communities, families, and individuals in detail.

When all is said, assuming the more or less free admission of foreigners for limited periods of travel and observation, we want to know and ought to know concerning those coming from other lands and cultures what will be their contribution to or subtraction from our general well-being (including their own); how they will fit or can be made to fit, into our social life. Of the essence of every sovereignty is the unquestioned and perhaps unquestionable right to decide who shall come and who shall stay out. It is all very well to hold every person free to go and come at his pleasure; but such freedom belongs at the top of the Bean-Stalk. Your right to lock your bedroom door extends logically to the national frontier.

The question of standards of admission is at the last a practical one, to be answered in the light of common sense and experience, illumined by such as we can muster of humanity and imagination; to the end of the largest benefit present and prospective to the country and the individual.

At this moment the immigration policy of the United States is conceived from the point of view of the town-pump; country-store cogitations warped by primitive provincial prejudices and superstitions with the justification of a widely advertised but almost wholly fallacious pseudo-ethnology, unsupported by any respectable study of the subject. Instead of inquiry as to the fitness of individuals for admission to our community, just now we are attributing *en masse* qualities to races as such. We have definitely abandoned our old-time posture as refuge for the oppressed and the persecuted, and along with that all pretense of admitting the individually desirable. Under the pretext of limiting immigration pending assimilation of our overcrowded masses of the foreign-born, we have not only reduced our immigration to all but infinitesimal numbers, but created arbitrary racial discriminations having no sound or scientific basis in experience or sound research.

Already there are compunctions. They will increase. Presently we shall see that all this is fallacious, and we shall modify our policy. It is not germane here to discuss the question of the numbers wise to admit, needed in industry and in the general development of our still new and still underpopulated land. That is quite another matter. But the most superficial examination brings forth the fact which just now it is the vogue to overlook; namely, that in every phase of our life we are indebted to immigrants—yes, conspicuously of the particular racial groups upon which our policy casts aspersions—for contributions of indispensable kinds, without which America could not have become what she is—even on the most materialistic plane; not to mention spiritual gifts of every kind.

Himself an Italian, author of "The Soul of an Immigrant," one of the most poignant of our American autobiographies, Mr. Panunzio, now professor of Social Economics at Whittier College in California, with sweet-spirited yet searching analysis, deals with the problem from the point of view of one of our most valuable individual acquisitions from abroad. He shows how the late amendments to our immigration law have actually worked to defeat their own ostensible purpose; the harm they have done to both sides in the interchange. He is scholarly yet dramatic, human yet scientific, in handling a question which thus far has been merely bungled and bedevilled by ignorance.

Be the degree of restriction what it may, we must find some better basis for it than that which now prevails. We must take this intricate subject out of the hands of amateur social philosophers motivated by prejudices and armed with unwarranted assumptions of racial superiority (almost invariably that of their own origin!) and arrive at some method of screening which will save for us the desirable individuals of whatever origin. To this desirable end Professor Panunzio's admirable study is a most valuable contribution.

Mr. F. C. Wood, a former librarian, is quoted by the Grosvenor Library Bulletin of Buffalo as saying: "People steal books to gratify their selfishness—a certain ego, which tells them they are entitled to the books if they want them. Students often will take a book out of the library in order to use it for class reports and other lessons. Radicals on certain subjects will mutilate books which do not please them."

The Truth About Smith

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH. By E. KEBLE CHATTERTON. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1927. \$4.

Reviewed by WALTER S. HAYWARD
Harvard University

OUR first American historian has a new defender. E. Keble Chatterton, in this second volume to appear in the Golden Hind Series of the lives of great explorers, takes up the cudgels in behalf of Captain John Smith. The controversy as to Smith's credibility has raged long and often fiercely. Far back in the seventeenth century, Thomas Fuller, in his "Worthies of England," the earliest printed biography of Smith, remarked of the gentleman: "It soundeth much to the diminution of his deeds that he alone is the herald to publish and proclaim them." The first modern whisper of suspicion was raised in 1860 by Dr. Charles Deane, who pointed out that Smith's own statements in his writings were often at variance. Other historians were quick to follow with the notice of new discrepancies, tending to show that either Smith was a liar or else unduly oblivious to the importance of dates and recorded history.

The first part of this biography is little more than a paraphrase of Smith's own account of his early travels and adventures, which he wrote in 1629, when he was forty-nine years old, and when presumably his memory as to what had happened so many years before was somewhat hazy. If Smith does not, like Munchausen, strain probability beyond the limit of belief, yet his deeds and exploits border on the superhuman. Mr. Chatterton, however, accepts them at their face value. He admits Smith was inaccurate, but is profoundly convinced, nevertheless, of his veracity.

The case against Smith is based chiefly on what happened in Virginia, first because of the great variations in the accounts which Smith himself gave of his adventures, and second because of the new evidence brought to light in the writings of Smith's contemporaries.

Smith himself wrote three accounts of Virginia. The first appeared in a letter sent back from the colony in 1608 to a friend, and was reprinted in England, without his knowledge or permission, under the title "A True Relation of Virginia." He himself published in 1612 a "Map of Virginia, with a Description of the Country, Commodities, People, Government, and Religion." In 1624 appeared his "General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles," purporting to be a collection of tales written by the individuals concerned, and collected and edited by Smith. This latter work, therefore, was printed sixteen years after the account he wrote at the time of his experiences.

Mr. Chatterton in one way and another tries to reconcile some of the discrepancies between these accounts. Other discrepancies he altogether fails to mention. The chief bone of contention is, of course, the Pocahontas story, and this the author swallows whole, in spite of the weight of evidence against it.

It can hardly be doubted that Smith's statements are often fallacious, and it is unfortunate that Mr. Chatterton's admiration for his subject has somewhat blinded him to the facts. Smith was an arch-subjectivist of a time not noted particularly for self effacement. Yet, when all is said and done, Smith remains a dauntless explorer, an individual of the greatest common sense where he was not himself concerned, and a person to whom literature is indebted for some extremely enlivening narratives.

The Saturday Review of Literature

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.....Editor
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.....Associate Editor
AMY LOVEMAN.....Associate Editor
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.....Contributing Editor
NOBLE A. CATHCART.....Publisher

Published weekly by The Saturday Review Co., Inc., Henry S. Canby, President; Roy E. Larsen, Vice-President; Noble A. Cathcart, Secretary-Treasurer, 25 West 45th Street, New York. Subscription rates, per year, postpaid: in the U. S. and Mexico, \$3.50; in Canada, \$4; in Great Britain, 18 shillings; elsewhere, \$4.50. All business communications should be addressed to 25 West 45th Street, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 1, 1879. Vol. IV. No. 27.

Copyright, 1928, by The Saturday Review Co., Inc.