

very simply by following the precedent of mathematics, where truth is a matter of definition. Two and two are four because, by agreement, four is the sum of two and two. A figure with four equal sides and four right angles is a square; ergo, a figure not having these qualities is not a square. By following out this rule, many difficulties would be avoided. Take an example. A man reports that there is a red cow in the front yard. A hypercritical scientist objects to the observation. Is the animal not really a heifer or an ox or a bull? What criterion is there for stating that the color was red? The witness may have been color-blind. A still more precise philosopher immediately shakes his head dubiously over the problem of whether cows and front yards have objective reality. These are troublesome points as matters are; but they could all be avoided by agreeing that one of the attributes of a front yard is that it contains a red cow. "If it does not contain a red cow, it is not a front yard."

Proceeding, then, by sensible stages, we arrive at the idea that, a Christian being a *good* man, Deacon Jones, who absconded with the church funds, is not a Christian. George Washington, as a *great* man, could not have been involved in any anticipatory violations of the Eighteenth Amendment. The United States of America, as an epitome of wisdom and virtue, would always be right. If it is not right, it is not the United States of America.

And another thing! This book is a scientific treatise. But the publishers have assigned it to philosophy. Did not the author study philosophy at Harvard in the days of James, Royce, and Santayana? One has visions, therefore, of a great reform in library circles. Think of this volume, which will undoubtedly be shelved under humor (Dewey System 827.86), starting a precedent whereby all philosophy will similarly be catalogued.

## Blake a Century Later

THE ENGRAVED DESIGNS OF WILLIAM BLAKE. By LAURENCE BINYON. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1927. \$35.

BLAKE'S "SONGS OF INNOCENCE," reproduced from a copy in the British Museum. New York: Minton, Balch & Co. 1926. 25 colored plates. \$5.

THE NOEL DOUGLAS REPLICAS WILLIAM BLAKE. Poetical Sketches. London: 1926.

THE POEMS AND PROPHECIES OF WILLIAM BLAKE. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1927.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF BLAKE. By MAX PLOWMAN. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1927.

THE MYSTICISM OF WILLIAM BLAKE. By HELEN C. WHITE. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, Number 23. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by S. FOSTER DAMON

IN March, 1827, Beethoven died; in August of the same year, Blake, a fellow titan, died. All Vienna followed Beethoven to his tomb, and recently the whole world celebrated his centenary. A few friends followed Blake to Bunhill Fields, and recently a few private societies celebrated his centenary.

Yet it is Blake on whom the books are being written today. Beethoven's fame is fixed; one can say little new about him, except on questions of detail. But the value of Blake's works are still being fought over, their meanings explored, their texts corrected; for Blake in his earliest volumes summed up the coming century of poetry, then leaped forward to discoveries that foreshadow our own immediate future. Blake was a century ahead of his world: that is why our world is interested in him for himself and not for his centenary.

In the latest pile of new volumes, Laurence Binyon's "Engraved Designs of William Blake" is by all odds the handsomest. It contains eighty-two plates, nineteen of them colored, which are arranged to illustrate the various methods and stages of Blake's engraving. The reproductions of the color-prints are done unusually well: they imitate shades and textures so exactly that they really give the sensation of looking at originals.

Mr. Binyon's text is the first extended and authoritative discussion, by an expert, of a subject hitherto treated very scantily. In his book-making, as in everything else, Blake was an experimentalist,

driven on by dissatisfaction with ordinary methods, into discoveries of wholly new and completely beautiful techniques. The ghost of brother Robert may have revealed one technical secret to William; but Mr. Binyon shows that Blake really evolved several processes, and endeavors with considerable success to trace the course of Blake's experimentation. Thus another mystery is solved and another myth exploded.

Now in Blake's volumes, the designs on each page often say as much as the text: they may be a commentary on it, or they may form a complete series of ideas by themselves. Consequently Mr. Binyon's careful description of the "Prophetic Books," page by page, with due regard for former and conflicting interpretations, is of vast importance to students of Blake's philosophy. Indeed, his entire Catalogue of Engraved Designs cuts in half the need for those rare and expensive volumes, the Keynes "Bibliography" and the Russell "Engravings of William Blake."

The importance of the decorations in Blake's works is being recognized: as several facsimiles of his original editions are being issued.

The "Songs of Innocence," which has recently appeared, is bare of all foreign text whatsoever—even of a modern title-page—except for a miniature note at the very end. It really resembles the book as Blake planned it. One wonders, however, why that especial copy was chosen for reproduction; the coloring is so hasty and even tasteless that one suspects Mrs. Blake did it overnight for a customer not too particular. "The Shepherd" and "A Dream" are decidedly smoochy.

The "Poetical Sketches," Blake's first and only printed book of verse, has also appeared in a charming facsimile which reproduces even the bad inking and the British Museum stamp on the last page. One's only regret is that it does not contain a list of those misprints which Blake himself corrected in some copies.

The Fitzwilliams copy of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" is now in process of reproduction in England by Max Plowman, poet and essayist. He has already prepared a new text of Blake for the Everyman Library. This text is exceedingly careful: his footnotes indicate collation throughout with originals—in some cases, several originals, for he records variants of Blake's own. "The Gates of Paradise" is included complete in facsimile—the first reproduction which the general public has been able to get; and the more valuable as no book of Blake's suffers more from the divorce of text and design. Unfortunately, the size of the volume prevented the inclusion of three works which Blake never engraved: the early "Tiriel" and the unfinished "French Revolution" and "Four Zoas." The introduction is sane and sympathetic; it is especially distinguished by the first announcement of the structure of that crucial work, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," hitherto considered as little more than a scrap-book.

Mr. Plowman's "Introduction to the Study of Blake" states exceedingly clearly the essential facts that an ordinary person must know in order to appreciate Blake's prophetic books. The results of Mr. Plowman's insight are so very lucid and apparently simple that the greatest chaos spring into shape at his command. For example, Drs. Sloss and Wallis, in their recent edition of Blake's text, described that great epic of the human mind, "The Four Zoas," as an "inextricable confusion." Now that confusion is unconfounded, Mr. Plowman has analyzed the nine divisions of Blake's longest poem as follows: Night I, the division of the Loins.

\*As the occasional blurring or repainting of these designs sometimes involves more difficulty than might be imagined in their description, I take advantage of a footnote to record the solution of a typical problem. Mr. Binyon has described the "Introduction" to the "Songs of Innocence" (no. 183) as follows: "On either side of the text are interlacing branches forming oval spaces in which are figures of children." I sympathize with his reticence, as I have puzzled over these little vignettes (there are four in each column) for some years. I forget how many originals I examined; but finally, in the Malkin copy (Keynes O), I found the answer, for there Blake, with great pains, had made the designs unmistakable. What Mr. Binyon called "figures of children" turned out to be: on the left (1) a robed and seated figure with another in the background; (2) a nude woman dancing; (3) a shepherd and flock; (4) a mother sitting over a cradle with a baby in it; and in the column on the right (5) a bird flying upward to a bough; (6) a nude woman with a baby in her lap; (7) a woman feeding birds; and (8) two figures seated beneath a bough.

Night II, the division of the Heart.

Night III, the division of the Mind.

Night IV, the division of the Spirit.

Night V, Orc (the sex instinct) is born of the divided Spirit.

Night VI, Mind enters the realm of Spirit.

Night VII, the Fall, according to Genesis.

Night VIII, the Crucifixion.

Night IX, the Last Judgment.

Thus Mr. Plowman solves one of the worst of the Blake problems. He also chooses the title-page of "Thel," to demonstrate how Blake's designs are to be interpreted; and he paraphrases the general course of "Jerusalem" in the most lucid of ethical terms. To write thus specifically of the fundamentals of Blake's philosophy usually requires decades, rather than years, of study. Mr. Plowman's work will prove invaluable for those who wish to know something of Blake's thought and feeling before attacking his works.



From the University of Wisconsin comes a study of Blake's mysticism. It attempts to define mysticism, to study typical mystics, then to define Blake's own mysticism and his "message," and finally to evaluate Blake in terms of other mystics. I fear that this plan is a mistake: Blake stands or falls in his relation to reality, and not to other mystics. And consequently Blake suffers when Professor White at last unmasks her canons of orthodoxy. "Blake," she concludes, "is not a great mystic in any sense that means anything; he is a prophet, interesting and suggestive, but very imperfect and incomplete. And as a visionary, his real power is not to be sought, in the works by which he himself set most store, but in the lyrics of his early manhood and in his pictorial art." This conclusion has been reached, I feel, by an unwitting comparison of Blake's records of What Is (as he saw it) with saints' ideals of What Ought To Be; and naturally Blake suffers, all the more as Professor White can make nothing of the "Prophetic Books" (her bibliography lists only one very corrupt text of the "Four Zoas"), and is quite unaware that the Job engravings are packed and crowded with symbolism, in spite of Wicksteed's excellent book on the subject. So she ranges herself sensibly and earnestly on the side of the angels, with the air of having put the world right at last about Blake, yet still a trifle dazzled by words like "visions" and "mysticism," and wholly unsuspecting what she has missed.

## Catspaws for the Zeitgeist

(Continued from page 677)

lent to commercialized vice. Shrewd entrepreneurs see a public weakness, and turn it into cash. They may be symbols of an economic order and unwitting agents of change, but they are also hard-boiled men and women in search of a profit, and are best regarded as such. And much sweaty journalism comes from honest cynics who believe the public to be swine and the difference between bad and good unimportant in dealing with them. The most logical person in the world of cheap journalism is an American intellectual who believes that our civilization is properly doomed to destruction, thinks that the tabloid is an excellent agent in hastening the desired event, and operates one for this very purpose. He at least thinks he pulls the great sow humanity by its nose. But we others, who do not share his hope of an immediate débâcle, do not have to be dragged after, helpless and unresisting, like symbols in a Russian drama. We may not have much control over our destinies, but we have enough to make a choice.

## The Saturday Review of Literature

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## Distinguished Fiction

THE WAY THINGS ARE. By E. M. DELAFIELD. New York: Harper & Bros. 1928.  
A GIRL ADORING. By VIOLA MEYNELL. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

WE have bracketed these books not so much because of similarity in type between them as because they seem to us alike to exemplify a virtue all too rare in contemporary fiction—lack of stridence. Miss Meynell writes of the young girl at the gates of love, untried, eager, afraid, and Mrs. Delafield of the married woman, sucked up by a sudden romantic attachment from the rut of routine only to realize that the bonds of affection, and the decencies it imposes, can be too powerful for the pull of passion. Both deal with homely life and circumstance—neither goes far beyond the family circle for her incident—and both deal with it with that nice perception of values that views life in perspective and knows that the small duties and automatic responses to custom of the daily round of living imperceptibly but surely mitigate the tragedies and disappointments of existence. Theirs is civilized writing, aware of the complications of human relationships but not stamped by them into bitterness or wrath, sensitive but not sentimental, and Mrs. Delafield's, at least, illuminated by a penetrating but never mordant satirical humor.

"The Way Things Are" is the tale of Laura Temple who for seven years had been married to good, undemonstrative, well-content Alfred.

Every evening after dinner they sat in the drawing room, or, on those rare summer evenings when it was hot, in the garden, and Alfred talked not at all, and Laura, in spite of almost frenzied resolutions to the contrary, found herself preparing to talk—and often, indeed, actually talking—about the children, the servants, or the question of expense.

Life, so far as outward manifestations were concerned, had not been unkind to Laura. She had a husband to whom his home spelled contentment, two boys, one of whom she loved and the other of whom she adored, a well-ordered and comfortable establishment, neighbors, and occasional social diversion. But buried deep under layers of domestic affection, under the habits of housewife and friend, lived Laura the creative artist and intellectual woman, whose soul craved understanding and mind stimulating conversation. When Duke Ayland appeared to give them to her, Laura, by almost insensible steps, fell in love with him, and the rest of Mrs. Delafield's story is the narrative of an attachment which is submerged by the tides of duty, affection, and motherhood. Laura, having tasted the delights of a companionship in which she appeared to another unique instead of matter of course as she did to her husband, finds that established ties are too much for her, and renounces the prospect of romance.

She was in love with Duke, undoubtedly, but she could not, at a distance of two hundred miles, remain in love with him indefinitely—nor he with her.

Alas, for the brief-lived romanticism of an attachment between a man and a woman, unsupported by even occasional proximity! Laura at last admitted to herself that she and Duke Ayland, in common with the vast majority of their fellow-beings, were incapable of the ideal, imperishable, love for which the world was said to be well lost. . . .

The children, her marriage vows, the house, the ordering of the meals, the servants, the making of a laundry list every Monday—in a word, the things of respectability—kept one respectable. In a flash of unavoidable clear-sightedness that Laura would never repeat if she could avoid it, she admitted to herself that the average attributes only of the average woman were hers. . . .

It dawned upon her dimly that only by envisaging and accepting her own limitations, could she endure the limitations of her surroundings.

This is quiet writing, and "The Way Things Are" is a quiet book. But it is an incisive book, and a wise one, understanding in its psychology, detached in its outlook, and yet quick with its sympathy for human nature. In its own gentle fashion it is a pitiless book; recent fiction can show few more completely relentless characterizations than the figure of Alfred Temple whose prototype is to be found among thousands of men who would be startled at the suggestion that they had serious deficiencies as husbands. This is depiction that deserves to rank with the far more bitter delineation, by the author of "Elizabeth," in "Vera."

Miss Meynell's volume, like Mrs. Delafield's, is so unassuming in manner, so quiet in tone, so subtle in psychology, as to need to be regarded in retrospect fully to be appreciated. She builds up her story of the "girl adoring," who worshipped her sister-in-law, loved her brother, and admired her aunt with

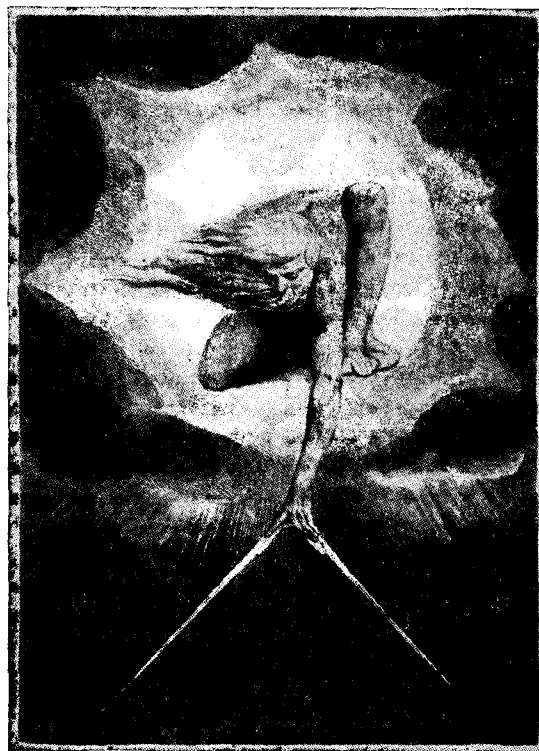
eager enthusiasm, and whose untested heart fluttered panic-stricken from love, but gave itself finally with the completeness of the wild thing conquered, with delicacy, with grace, and with comprehension. Claire, Laura, Morely, Gilda, Hague the lover, whose greater maturity tried to preserve its tranquillity from passion as Claire's untried heart shied away from it—these are figures sketched with liveliness and precision. There is a poetic quality—a wistfulness—to Miss Meynell's tale that takes the place of Mrs. Delafield's more ironical understanding. Both have written novels of distinction.

## A Classical Farce

THE THREE-CORNERED HAT. By DON PEDRO ANTONIO DE ALARCON. Translated by MARTIN ARMSTRONG. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1928. \$3.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

EVERYONE connected with the presentation of this droll and piquant story to a new English-speaking public is to be congratulated upon the book that has been made. "The Three-Cornered Hat" was originally written by that Don Pedro Antonio who made it a Spanish classic. This was in 1874. Mr. Armstrong has now translated it with a freshness and gusto distinctly admirable; Norman Tealby has furnished, both in line and color, the most delightful illustrations. The pub-



THE ACT OF CREATION  
Frontispiece plate in William Blake's "Europe."

lishers have fittingly clothed the long, thin volume.

The story is both witty and endearing. Its substance is the eternal tale of love-roguery of which Boccaccio presents to us so many varieties. The charming faithfulness of the ugly but fascinating miller and his beautiful wife is offset by the hobgoblin machinations of the tricornered Corregidor and his evil familiar, Weasel. At the end of the tale, the Corregidor's wife, Doña Mercedes Carrillo de Albornoz y Espinosa de los Monteros, (magnificent name!) rises superbly to the occasion and comports herself with excruciating sublimity. The night scenes of entanglement and misunderstanding are highly-colored comedy, with a dash of possible tragedy for spice.

This is capital and most spirited farce. To read it, is as if one were witnessing the most deftly-manuevered of puppet shows, jiggling with figures costumed from pre-Napoleonic times. Yet the human nature of the various characters is full of life as well as of liveliness. We easily believe in the innocent fascination of Frasquita as well as in the resourcefulness, heartbreak, and tortured vengefulness of Lucas, the Andalusian miller. There is a happy "curtain" for all, save for the Corregidor, but that punchinello is not too villainous to be convincing.

The author's life was not entirely unchequered. In Spain in 1857 his play "El Fijo Prodigio" was hissed from the boards and he then threw in his fortunes with O'Donnell in Morocco. But later his picaresque account of what followed sold fifty thousand copies in two weeks. Don Pedro Antonio possessed the proper zest for life and the true comic spirit. We are fortunate to have this extravaganza of his so perfectly rendered into our own tongue.

## Truculence and Tranquillity

LIFE AND THE STUDENT. By CHARLES HORTON COOLEY. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1927. \$2.50.

LITERARY BLASPHEMIES. By ERNEST BOYD. New York: Harper & Bros. 1927. \$2.50.

PROFESSOR COOLEY notes "as the mark of a stable mind that antagonism cannot drive it to extremes," and he coins the interesting phrase "subservience of contradiction" for those who are inspired by opposition, take their cue from reactions, are governed by dislikes, and hence are never free in the subject. Originality raises new questions, but it is not much interested in controversy. "In every time the conspicuous radicals are likely to be contradictors and hence subservient, while real changes gestate in obscurity." He has himself one of those stable, even original, minds—radical enough on occasion, but his occasions are not conditioned by anyone's agreement or disagreement. Of the two kinds of interference with the mind's freedom however, he seems to feel the current and contemporary on the whole more tyrannous than the past and traditional. "In all epochs one who would write something tranquil and considerate must resist the spirit of the time, since, whatever the spirit of the time may be, it is never that;" and again, "a failure to see merit in long accepted authors throws more light on the critic than on the authors. There is always substantial ground for these reputations—one school of critics may be fooled, but not several from different times and cultures"—which brings me aptly to Mr. Boyd and his "Literary Blasphemies."

My previous impression of Mr. Boyd came from his "Studies in Ten Literatures," where it seemed that if one knew quite a little about the man being studied there was not much added either in the way of knowledge or suggestive interpretation; but if one knew next to nothing about him, one found the subject presented in good shape. Hence—with Mr. Boyd's wide range of languages and good control of them, with his pungent style and ability to give an intelligent account of things one was unlikely to know at first hand—he seemed a valuable writer in that field.

But here he turns to fields familiar to most of us and finds most of us intolerably mistaken about them. One may be permitted to suspect that he is mistaken about our opinions. A great many of his "blasphemies,"—if one can forget the truculence of the manner—seem shrewd and sensible in substance. But the truculence is continuous. He maintains with the conscientious persistence of a monk at his prayers, from defiant title to final paragraph, the principle that "an attitude of appreciative irreverence toward established reputations in literature is as essential a condition to free criticism as are skepticism and heresy to honest thinking." On this, "free criticism" might be apt to comment that while honesty, freedom, appreciation are essentials everywhere, neither irreverence nor reverence are essential to freedom—irreverence is more a question of manner than of thought. Neither skepticism nor faith, neither heresy nor agreement, are necessary to honest thinking. A free critic's concern is mostly with his direct reactions, but he does not surrender his freedom in being aware that a great reputation usually has some basis, and that other men's reactions may have value as a "check up" on his own. Mr. Boyd may be an irreverent heretic toward one church of critical opinion, but he is a fierce devotee of another, which is more or less the contemporary one.

Puritan, bourgeois, academic, orthodox, mid-Victorian, and so on, are terms of its ritualistic cursing, they are beginning to gather by repetition a faint flavor of cant. It is all in the natural course of things, and I am somewhat of that sect and denomination myself, but it is a step toward freedom when one realizes that in the grip of reaction against something one is no more free than in the grip of its tradition. The Jacobite to whom *émigré* and aristocrat were terms ritualistic cursing was no nearer to unfettered intelligence than the be-cursed aristocrat. Free criticism is an ideal never wholly achieved; we are all "thobbers," but we catch a glimpse of it now and then, like blue sky through the clouds, and now and then think it the fairest of human ideals. Meanwhile the