

"Sez 'E" or "Thinks 'E" by C. E. Montague, on page 880

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Good, Better, Best

NEVER before have so many readers asked for advice in the choice of books, which is probably the reason for the many complaints of the kind of advice given. There must be some panacea—so some readers think—which is applicable to every itch for reading, some formula which will prescribe for every taste and need. Another delusion, that it is easy to be sure of the best, dies hard, or never dies at all. Readers are not content to be told what is good, though whether a book is really good can be asserted by a competent judge with approximate certainty. They insist upon knowing whether a book is the best of a year, of a nation, of a century. They might learn from the history of the arts that "best" has seldom been used by wise judges except in a limited competition, and when used more broadly has proved to be wrong as often as right. Byron and Correggio were "bests" once. It is certain that they were, and are, good.

The problem of "bests" and even of "goods" has always aroused irritation. For "bests" there is no solution, and it would be wise to drop the word, except for masterpieces seasoned by at least half a century of reading. But surely we need more, not less, recommending of "goods." Books are expensive—they must compete with cheaper magazines—they are of all qualities, with the shoddy predominating. Advice is worth having, whether given as criticism or recommendation.

And this advice must inevitably be somewhat personal, although it should weigh in an even balance likes and dislikes which are temporal or individual and standards of excellence in art or truth which are timeless and universally human. "I like" is a personal expression, "it is good" is an abstraction. Without the first expressed predilection, the critic is merely logical and often fantastically wrong, since no emotion (which must always underlie reason) guides him. Without the second, he is limited by his own enthusiasms, which may become hysterias. Estimates should be appraisals, but they should be appraisals made with passion and with warmth.

The Editors of this *Review* intend to indicate their own personal choices among books they have read and liked and believe in, especially in books whose novelty or freshness makes recommendation desirable. Like the book clubs, they propose to deal in "goods" not in "bests," and hope to escape the ill advised criticism of those organizations by critics who insist that to choose a "good" implies an absolute "best." Furthermore, unlike the publishers, they have no books to sell, and, unlike the book clubs, no books to send out broadcast, and therefore can be arbitrary in their choices. And since the readers of this *Review* are probably aware of the kind of books the Editors like best—the extensions and the limitations of their taste—they propose to make these indicated preferences personal and selective in the sense that they will choose, not what they *ought*, perhaps, but what they *do* know and like in current books.

No one need take their suggestions unless there is a felt likemindedness. No one need be offended, if having a taste for detective stories, he finds on our list poems and histories of the decline of Rome. Our platform is "More advice: take it, or leave it; and get more where you can." And if we think that a book is the best of the century we shall prob-

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Song

By JOHN FINLEY, JR.

THE night-hawks, when the hour of day is by,
Ascend in heaven o'er the eastern hill,
Where doth Capella frailly shine and still
In her far realm beyond the treetop high,
And now as caselessly the airs fulfil
Day's little interval below the sky,
Circling and swift, they weave where none descrie
And call their plaintive chantry while they will.

A mother and a child, late in the field,
Retrace with unlike steps the saddened way,
And while the mother stoops, the child doth say
The sweet account of all its day did yield.

Thus, in the spring, birds for a little hour
Conceive brief melody before the night,
As would they pray God keep them to the light,
For that they love Him too in tiny power.

Now, one by one, in heaven pale worlds appear,
And child and bird the gentle light forget,
As coldly in the field the rivulet
Sings, lingering, its song, and night is near.

The night-hawks, when the light beloved so well
Is so soon quenched upon the western sky,
Among the stars over the pasture fly
And weave and sink again to where they dwell.

And only they their cares at evening tell,
Save as in valley deep the frogs reply
And, in the field beneath the starlight high,
The wakeful cow doth fret her nightly bell.

The Tie That Used to Bind*

By ELMER DAVIS

"WHAT is wrong with marriage?" seems to have become definitely the most popular topic of American conversation, now that there is no longer trouble in getting good gin; perhaps because everybody knows something about it, if only on the principle of *pars magna fui*, and nobody knows very much. Three professional groups know, or claim to know, more about it than the rest of us—the theologians by revelation, the novelists by artistic intuition, and the psychiatrists by the baser method of induction from observed evidence; but none of them gives the question a very satisfactory answer.

The verdict of the novelists, in so far as it can be summarized, seems to be that marriage is a great experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. The theologians, in the main, think that all that is needed is stricter enforcement; but they have the advantage of rejecting all evidence that conflicts with revealed truth. And the psychiatrists are hampered by getting most of their information from marriages that have plainly gone wrong. There is not much scientifically valuable evidence about the working of marriages which seem, to those involved and to their acquaintances, to go tolerably well.

The most sublime of recent thoughts on marriage comes from a theologian who also practises psychiatry. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, if the papers quote him correctly, says that the trouble is not so much with marriage as with the men and women who get married. This somewhat Procrustean doctrine offers, of course, a sufficient answer to the problems, not only of marriage, but of prohibition, the tariff, farm relief, municipal government, reparations, and war debts. Man was made for institutions, not the institutions for man; if he does not fit them, so much the worse for him.

Less sweeping are the two books by professional psychiatrists here considered. The authors of both would agree with Fosdick that the ideal of marriage is the durable monogamous union of a man and a woman who try to live together because they want to; both admit divorce, but only when a choice must be made between evils. Dr. Wile's book bears a somewhat misleading title; he is not arguing for a new type of marriage, but suggesting how the old type may be made more workable under modern conditions. His book is chiefly a compendium of advice to the married or those contemplating matrimony; all of it is sound and none of it is new, to those who have read extensively on this popular subject. Young people contemplating marriage, however, will find in it much excellent advice if no great novelty.

Dr. Hamilton's volume deserves more extended attention, because it offers just that sort of evidence that has hitherto been lacking. He persuaded a hundred married men and a hundred married women, including fifty-five pairs married to each other, to answer an enormous volume of questions, under conditions framed as carefully as possible to prevent the examiner from suggesting the replies. The re-

* WHAT IS WRONG WITH MARRIAGE. By Dr. G. V. HAMILTON and KENNETH MACGOWAN. New York: Albert & Charles Boni. 1929. \$3.
MARRIAGE IN THE MODERN MANNER. By IRA S. WILE and MARY DAY WINN. New York: The Century Company. 1929. \$2.

This Week

"What Is Wrong with Marriage?"

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"Falmouth for Orders."

Reviewed by ALFRED F. LOOMIS.

"Henry the Eighth."

Reviewed by WALLACE NOTESTEIN.

"Consecratio Medici."

Reviewed by HENRY R. VIETS, M. D.

"Evangelized America."

Reviewed by BERNARD DE VOTO.

"Further Correspondence of Samuel Pepys."

Reviewed by WILBUR CORTEZ ABBOTT.

"The Innocent Voyage."

Reviewed by ROBERT MACDOUGALL.

"The Snake Pit."

Reviewed by PHILLIPS D. CARLETON.

"The Way the World Is Going."

Reviewed by E. PRESTON DARGAN.

The Folder.

By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Next Week

Spring Book Number.

sult is analyzed and compiled by Kenneth MacGowan, with a copious apparatus of statistics, charts, graphs, and curves. Reading it, you feel that you have been endowed with the power to see through walls; you can watch the most intimate details of life in two hundred homes—and all with the loftiest scientific purpose. But how much is it worth?

So far as the method goes, the examiners have probably done as well as possible. MacGowan's analysis of the replies to questions framed by Hamilton might be called, in the Platonic and not invidious sense, the third remove from absolute truth; but that is about as near as we can get in such matters. A graver doubt springs from the number and character of the subjects examined. Two hundred human guinea pigs is a very large number to collect, but a very small number on which to base generalizations; especially as most of them come from a single class, and that the one least representative of the social body—the penniless intellectuals. None of these men, apparently is rich; half of them, by New York standards, are actually poor. Four fifths of them are engaged in intellectual occupations; and one suspects that most of the business men have intellectual interests. Forty-six of the two hundred men and women are engaged in the arts.

"They are above the average," says Mr. MacGowan, "in intellectual capacity, courage, honesty, and general enlightenment." Doubtless; also in willingness to talk. But persons who happen to know a considerable number of the two hundred doubt if their experience proves much about the human race. Certainly a group of which fifteen per cent feels that "adultery needs little or no justification," and in which half that number seem to think that it should be committed as a matter of principle, whether you like it or not, can hardly be regarded as representative.

The authors concede that if they had had two thousand or twenty thousand specimens to study a few of their conclusions might be reversed. No such pusillanimous moderation restrains John Broadus Watson, who writes an introduction. "I for one," he says, "have never felt that we should attempt to delay presenting our results to the public until a large enough number of cases can be cited to yield results statistically reliable." (Unreliable results are apt to make better reading.) "I would rather see the behavior of one white rat observed carefully from the moment of birth to death than to see a large volume of accurate statistical data on how two thousand rats learned to open a puzzle box."

"Sex," Dr. Watson warbles, "is admittedly the most important subject in life." And we want it explained to us, "not by our mothers and grandmothers, not by priests and clergymen in the interest of middle-aged mores, not by general practitioners, not even by Freudians"; but by Watsonite behaviorists who regard a man as objectively as an amoeba. The layman may hope they will also be objective enough to note some slight differences between a man and an amoeba. Our educational and scientific foundations, thinks Dr. Watson, are grievously illiberal. "If all of them were to spend all their income on the marriage problem—or better the problem of how men and women should live together (maybe it will turn out that marriage is not the solution)—they would be helping humanity far more in my opinion than if they continued to sponsor the physical and strictly biological sciences. Science has gone far enough for a time." (Amen, from a thousand pulpits.) "We as human beings should be allowed to catch up on the science of living together."

Hurrah! School is out. Roll up the map of Europe; it will not be needed these ten years. Shut down the universities, send Congress home; let the boll weevil go on keeping down the cotton crop, and cancer continue its beneficent work of cutting off people who have outlived their usefulness. Never mind what is happening in distant island universes; we are all going to have a grand good time watching caged pairs of adolescents learn how to open the puzzle box. Watson might rejoin that everybody is going to open it anyway, so we might as well learn how to do it right. But his methods of persuasion are better adapted to putting over a vanishing cream than to diverting the whole movement of scientific research.

But Dr. Watson, after all, did not write the book, though his introduction may deter many people from reading it. That would be a pity, for in evidence so scanty every reader can find scientific confirmation of what he believed already. This reviewer was

astonished to find so much support for the conclusion of common sense; which probably means that the reviewer, like most people, identifies common sense with his own opinions. The authors have resisted this temptation pretty well; and Dr. Hamilton deserves a special award of merit for admitting that doctors' bills seem to be the chief reason why middle-class New Yorkers do not save money, and that obstetricians' fees are one large cause of race suicide.

Fifty-one of the hundred men, forty-five of the hundred women, answered questions in such a way that Dr. Hamilton concluded they could be called happily married. (Flagrantly mismated couples were excluded from the research.) Whether you think this figure is too high, or too low, depends on your definition of happiness; Mr. Edison, who might be supposed to know more happy people than most of us, has lately said that he does not know any. Dr. Hamilton's system of grading, however, seems too severe; fifty per cent, quite properly, is the passing mark," but many questions called for a yes-or-no answer that few people could give. The fact that men seem happier than women may mean that they have more interests outside the home, and consequently less interest in what goes on in it. Or it may, the authors suggest, reflect the male tendency to put the best face on matters—to be chivalrous, idealistic, optimistic. The women, in this and other matters, are realists. That was pretty generally known already, but even this exiguous confirmation is interesting. In one point only does feminine realism fail—most husbands complain that their wives talk too much, most wives that their husbands talk too little. Rare is the woman who realizes that the less said the better.

What is wrong with these marriages, successful or unsuccessful? Temperamental more than sexual dissatisfactions; these two far more than anything else. The authors qualify; you can never be sure that sexual incompatibility is not at the root of a temperamental difference, or, conversely, that temperamental distaste does not contribute to sexual incompatibility. Money troubles run far behind; Dr. Hamilton concludes that most quarrels over money are only symptoms of a tension that has its root elsewhere.

In one point, the results of this research make painful reading for intellectuals. Among these two hundred specimens, people who did not go to college are more happily married than those who did; and women married to business men are more often happy than those married to intellectuals. Because the business men make more money? That doubtless helps; but perhaps the ability to make money is only one expression of a pervasive talent for dealing with things as they are. Maybe Hoover is right; make your money first and then seek the higher things. What is worse, wives who must ask their husbands for every nickel are happier than those who have allowances, and much happier than those who share their husbands' bank accounts. It begins to look as if the ideal husband for an intellectual woman is a big, virile brute who delights in making the pretty creature ask him for fifty cents, so that he can give her fifty dollars. Women who earn their own money show the lowest happiness rating of all; but the authors remark that here again it is hard to say which is cause and which effect.

Much of the detailed evidence on the sexual side of marriage has had to be withheld from a book intended for general sale.* Some conclusions that emerge from these two hundred cases confirm what had been generally suspected. Many women fall short of complete sexual satisfaction, and such a failure is conducive to neurosis. Men who have had a good deal of experience before marriage are apt to be good lovers, but restless husbands. People who fail to find satisfaction in marriage are not very likely to find it in adultery. (Dr. Watson objects to that word, but it is a convenient stencil; people know what it means.) Faithful wives and husbands are happier in marriage than those who stray—or, as the authors remind us, it may be only that those who are happily married are more likely to be faithful. Either way, it is hardly front-page news.

There may be more surprise at the statistical conclusion—from two hundred cases, remember—that men who have known only one woman, women who have known only one man, are more likely to be

* Dr. Hamilton's "A Research into Marriage" (Boni), intended for physicians and students of sociology, presents the statistics here unrecorded.

happy than those who have shopped around. There are more of such men, and fewer of such women, than you might expect; but remember that this group is peculiar. Men seem to have been growing more ascetic in recent decades and women less so; among the subjects born since 1890, the girls had actually had more pre-marital experience than the men. But on all these points Dr. Hamilton would need his twenty thousand cases before his results would prove much.

A lay reviewer has no business imposing his own interpretations on all this; but one thing sticks out clearly enough, and it brings us back to Fosdick. "The trouble with marriage is with the men and women who get married." Well, Dr. Hamilton's investigation shows pretty clearly that men and women who are physically healthy and nervously stable have a better than average chance for happiness in marriage; as they have in anything else. Only, Hamilton would say that the trouble is with the fathers and mothers of the people who get married. Bring up a child in the way he should not go—evade or silence his curiosity about sex, give him a constant picture of marital quarreling, fix a boy's affection too keenly on his mother or teach a girl that her father is hateful—and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Without any hope of its enactment, Dr. Hamilton suggests an ideal marriage and divorce law. Parenthood should be licensed by the state, and only to those who can pass a physical and mental examination; no couple should be allowed to have children till they have been married three years. This, he observes with truth, is not the companionate, the temporary childless union of a pair who are not sure they care enough for each other to live their lives together. People who feel like that should not marry, he says; what else they do is not the State's business. "But if the lovers want to marry, it is the State, and not the lovers, that should entertain doubts." This is such good sense that one despairs of ever seeing it on the statute books.

The same impracticality infects (to return to the other book under discussion) Dr. Wile's proposals for making the best of marriage as it is. "Probably the fundamental reason for the dissolution of so many American marriages is not that our ideals are too low, but that they are too high. We want everything or nothing." Why not? It is just this optimistic idealism that has made America great; at least that is what most people believe has made America great, which comes to the same thing. The crowning glory of American greatness is the Coolidge-Hoover bull market. What made it? Idealism; the high expectations of people who were not content with a niggardly twenty-per-cent profit, but held on for two hundred per cent, and got it.

Of course, idealism costs something. We want everything, as Dr. Wile observes, and are dissatisfied with anything less. But when Dr. Wile intimates that if we expected less we might get more; that, as Carlyle put it, when you decrease the denominator you increase the numerator, he asks more than human nature will endure, at least in America of 1929. In this land of opportunity and the instalment plan, no man or woman of spirit and self-respect could expect less than everything.

Dr. Wile, in short, proves his Americanism by himself expecting the impossible. If the fault is not with marriage but with the people who marry, what sort of person can make a marriage work? All sorts of high authorities from King Solomon down have given us definitions of the perfect wife. Responding to the changed emphasis of our times, Dr. Wile essays to define the perfect husband. "Generally speaking, the man who has the best chance to hold his wife's affection is the one who—" The description is too long to quote, but it sounds like a nominating speech. The man who is and does all of that could not only hold his wife's affection, but gain pretty nearly all the other objects of human endeavor, including the affection of most of the other women he knew, whether he wanted it or not. Few of us have ever met him.

If an improvement in marriage must depend on so much improvement in men and women, it must be feared that the monogamous millennium is not yet in sight. And perhaps that is a good thing for men and women, if not for the institution of marriage; for marriage, like obsolescent pre-war battleships, can be modernized only at a terrific cost. "Who can say," asks Dr. Wile, "that our great business preëminence is not, to some extent at least, a by-product of the large number of unhappy mar-

riages?" No one can say it who has observed that familiar phenomenon, the man who gets on in the world by spending twelve hours a day at the office, because he hates to go home and is too much afraid of his wife to go anywhere else.

Let us be true, then, to the spirit of America, even if it does keep the divorce courts busy. Not by men who wasted their time in uxorious dalliance was our imposing business structure built up; nor, for that matter, was Radio run up to 530 (or whatever astronomical figure it may have reached by the time this is printed) by women who cared so much for their husbands that they saved their money in case John might need it in some unforeseen pinch. Hard as it may be on the art of conversation, it might be safer to stop worrying about what is the matter with marriage. Is the American Home worth saving, at the cost of American Optimism and American Prosperity? The Noes have it, without a rising vote.

Aboard a Square-Rigger

FALMOUTH FOR ORDERS. By A. J. VILLIERS. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1929. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ALFRED F. LOOMIS

SINCE the turn of the century there have been only a few books that shed an authentic afterglow on the disappearing age of sail—personal narratives, that is, of seamen who were also writers. I call three of these to mind,—Riesenberg's "Under Sail," Lubbock's "Round the Horn Before the Mast," and Bone's "The Brassbounder." Perhaps more have been written. These three, at any rate, for wealth and intimacy of detail of the life aboard a square-rigger, rank almost with Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast."

And now comes a fourth, from which the qualifying adverb may well be omitted. "Falmouth for Orders" is as vivid and valuable a record of seafaring in the twentieth century as "Two Years Before the Mast" was of the life nearly a hundred years ago. It is even more. With care the author has assembled data concerning the last fleet of square-rigged ships and laid down facts of nationality, of purchase cost, of wages and maintenance, and of voyages, so that the historian of the future need not grope for an accurate picture of the expiring conditions of today.

Yet this admirable volume is in no sense a dry record of facts. The author, learning that two four-masted barques, one the Swedish *Beatrice* and the other the Finnish *Herzogin Cecilie*, were loading with grain at Port Lincoln, Australia, and were bound for Falmouth, England, for orders, shipped as able seaman on the latter—a lone Australian in a mixed crew of Swedes and Finns. Villiers felt that this might be the last race between survivors of the post-clipper era, and both as a seaman and as a reporter he wanted to be in it. As the affair worked out, it was no race at all, for the ways of the two ships parted, the *Beatrice* sailing west around the Cape of Good Hope, and the *Herzogin Cecilie* east around the Horn, and arriving at Falmouth eighteen days ahead of her competitor. But all through the voyage and all through the book there is the feeling of racing—of anxiety in fog, of hopelessness in calm, and of carrying sail to the last minute and then shaking it out in the teeth of the slackening gale.

Excitement, I must quote from a midnight episode to give the full flavor of it:

It looked as if it were walking into the arms of death to go on that (tops'l) yard. Maybe it was, in a way, though one by one we went out, and nobody thought of that. . . . The loose end of the chain-sheet, flying insanely around, swished through the air with a mad s-s-s-s, threatening murder to us all, and every now and then thwacking the steel lower tops'l yard with a crash that shook it, setting up an awful display of electric sparks. It tore a hole in the canvas of the lower tops'l, and the lee side of that went, too. The loose ends of the wire buntlines that had carried away were up to the same game, coiling through the air like flying snakes, writhing around us, just missing us, flying into the air, and entwining around the rigging. These were only some of the things that we had to face to lay out on that yard. The whole of the tops'l—and it was 95 feet wide by 25 feet deep of best storm canvas—flapped back over the yard every now and then, seeming to say to us that if we were mad enough to go out there—well, it would know what to do with us, that was all. We went; it belled back upon us so that we had to slip down on the foot ropes and lie there for our lives; it flung itself over that yard in a furious attempt to dislodge the puny humans who had come to fight it. Pieces of it that had carried away were flying around in the air like the loose buntline

ends, and if any of these had caught us around the neck it would have been the end. . . . Once a steel buntline, writhing back over the yard, caught Zimmermann in the head and brought the swift blood. He reeled a bit, but carried on. Then after a while we saw that he had fainted, and lay in imminent peril across the yard. For one awful moment the canvas stayed still while we fought to him, and then, because we could not take him down we lashed him there. And when we had time to remember him again we found that he had come to, and was working. Game? I don't know; it was no use any being in the ship-of-sails who was not like that.

Romance? You have it in the mere recital of the ship's dimensions and in the number and the ages of her crew. The *Herzogin Cecilie*, 314 feet in length and of 3,242 tons weight, was built in 1902 as a German training ship, to be handled by a crew of ninety men and boys. In her race to Falmouth in 1928, her rig unchanged, she was handled by a foremast crew of nineteen men and boys, all of whom had come into the world since the building of their ship, and whose average age was less than eighteen years. The mate was twenty-two, and the master, more than twice the age of three-fifths of



HENRY VIII

From the painting after Holbein in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle.

his crew, was an old man of forty-three. Zimmermann, the game salt mentioned in the quotation above, was nineteen.

If the author had wanted to romanticize this truthful record he had full opportunity, for on the second day out from port a stowaway bobbed up—and she was a girl in boy's clothes. But she was received with resignation by the master and mates and was told to make herself some civilized clothes and get to work sweeping and cleaning, and with alarm by the crew who feared that she would bring them head winds. Her story told, she is dismissed from the narrative, and there is no intimation that she incited the crew to mutiny or did any of the romantic things credited to the modern heroine of sea fiction. Sailors are captious critics. If details are incorrect they naturally reject the whole. It is refreshing to offer them a book which without exaggeration gives all the realism that a landsman craves, written by a seaman with a sympathetic feeling for the sea.

According to a dispatch to the *New York Times*, a bequest of \$100,000 by an Australian judge, Henry Bournes Higgins, has brought the work of the Royal Irish Academy into the limelight. The money will be used for the publication of some of the twelve thousand valuable ancient Irish manuscripts in its library and for the foundation of traveling art scholarships and for research work.

While the burning of the Four Courts will result in many blanks in the story of Ireland during the twentieth century, the Royal Irish Academy possesses a wealth of fact and legend most of which is as yet undiscovered in the twelve thousand or more manuscripts. Lack of funds has been largely responsible for the fact that so far the major part of these has never been translated. Some of them date back to the eleventh century. At least forty-five are on parchment, including the famous "Book of the Dun Cow," as the "Lebor na h-Uidhre" is known, which is a codex compiled by monks of Clonmacnoise, and includes the fabulous stories of the invasions by which Ireland was peopled, and the poems attributed to St. Columba.

Monarch and Man

HENRY THE EIGHTH. By FRANCIS HACKETT. New York: Horace Liveright. 1929. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WALLACE NOTESTEIN
Yale University

THE public is likely to ask for the impossible in history, something short, interesting, and comprehensive. But obviously the most entertaining works of history are those that cover a short period at great length and so allow the reader to see the same characters appearing again and again. Macaulay was able to enlist the attention of *My Lady* because he wrote four volumes concerning the events of a few years; and the circle about whom *My Lady* read, if more important than her own, was not more difficult to know; there was the same rubbing of people against people and circumstances, there was the same number of plots and counterplots and byplots. She could keep track of it as if these people were on her own special 'phone list.

Mr. Hackett is no Macaulay but he has been able to give us in one rather large volume the same effect of daily knowledge of people not too far away from us, yes, and to give us a history that combines features of a Walter Scott romance with a modern realistic and psychological novel. We meet Anne Boleyn, her ruined sister, her brother, and her father, her friends and those who would put her down if they could; we see her playing to win or lose it all, and when she loses, we are sorry for her, sorry perhaps as in the old verse, "she waltzed rather well, I'm sorry she's dead." We meet the people of the court at Richmond and in the hunting field, we come to know old Chapuys, the Spanish ambassador, gathering secrets while he might, we see young ladies-in-waiting waving handkerchiefs from windows, and we hear who told on them. Greater events are shown us, the policies of the mighty Wolsey, those policies written in sand, the ever changing diplomacy of Henry, Charles V, and Francis I, which, by some skill of the author, is made clear and easy to read about. Those portentous sovereigns whom we vaguely remembered out of children's texts become people we have known. Dénouement of course there is none, as in the novels of our day, but unhappy endings all through, dying speeches, and blood spurting on Tower Hill. And to the reader the best of it is that it all happened. It is as real as rainy days that follow one another, more real, I think, than the Elizabeth-Essex story we have all been talking about. Strachey is very good reading, we come away from it aware of tragedy, but feeling no katharsis of emotion, wondering rather about the clever writer.

One may be allowed to suspect that Mr. Hackett first became interested in Henry VIII on account of his wives, an aspect of Henry's life that even the most constitutional of historians finds it difficult to ignore. One suspects that it was a psychological interest, an interest in the "bull man" who "had embarked on that most ambitious of all adventures, the grouping of world-facts around a personal desire." That interested him, and the desires, aspirations, and repressions of all the many people around Henry came to interest him. In dealing with them he is likely to allow imagination to run in front of knowledge. Again and again he constructs from a few hints a whole personality, a personality that fits together and seems probable enough, but may be far from the truth, which, if we knew, might be improbable. With all his psychology Mr. Hackett seems to me to miss one of his chances. He is concerned with the progressive deterioration of Henry, but not so much with that subtle change in character wrought by unlimited power in the hands of an undisciplined person as with the physical weakness that came with weight and years, into the details of which he goes with as much loving and realistic attention as Rupert Brooke in his least pleasant poem.

Mr. Hackett is obviously not an old hand at history. Of what parliament was at this time he has none too clear a notion and he touches it gingerly as he would a nettle. Nor does he know a great deal about the relations of Church and State before Henry VIII, and in that long history lies much of the explanation of what happened when Henry failed to get his divorce. He is too inclined to accept, with an engaging credulity, the good stories told by Roper, Cavendish, and various ambassadors. Furthermore, he is given to fancying purpose where probably none was. He sees Thomas Cromwell intent on overturning the Church. Cromwell was less interested in the Church than in serving his master