

Points of View

In Rebuttal

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

In your issue dated April 20th, you were good enough to carry a review of my recent book, "The Story of Superstition."

The reviewer, S. Foster Damon, of Brown University, was a bit impatient because he found it necessary to take some of my statements on trust—or not at all. Thus he noticed my remark, "One of the great text-books of Jewish mysticism says: 'Beauty diffuses itself into the world as an apple.'" "The remark," he complains, "is curious enough to make one search further in that book; but the title is not given."

"The Story of Superstition" is intended to be a popular and simple account, and it did not occur to me that I would include in my circle of readers such scholarly souls that documentation would be helpful instead of harmful. But for the benefit of the reviewer I may say that the book in question is none other than the Zohar, otherwise known as Midrash ha-Zohar or Midrash de-Rabbi Shim'on ben Yochai. I am sure that Mr. Damon will scurry at once to its Cabalistic pages, and I sincerely hope that he will favor the public with a review of that obscure, pseudographic collection of mystic lore—as soon as he has mastered its contents.

But your reviewer's annoyance does not end here. He notices a half sentence in my book as follows: "The Rosicrucians during the Middle Ages indulged in priapic ceremonies." This he is inclined to doubt. "As the Rosicrucians did not appear till the seventeenth century, such an early beginning needs proof; and their ceremonies, as far as they are known, seem to have been of the most decent and exalted."

Now that we have learned that even simple popular outlines are to be carefully documented so that readers will not miss a chance to read the Zohar, would it be out of order for me to suggest the innovation of documented and annotated reviews? I do not know whence the learned reviewer derived his information, and, while I know that a certain statement in the article Rosicrucians in the *Encyclopedia Americana* can be interpreted to mean that the order began in the seventeenth century, I refuse to believe that this alone was the source of Mr. Damon's knowledge. Even the Hasting's "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" (a most conservative authority in these matters) traces the society back to about the year 1420, while other authorities trace it back still farther.

In matters of this kind, there are at least two methods by which one might seek information. One might go to the works of the Rosicrucians themselves, or one might go to the books of impartial scientific writers. In the preparation of the half sentence to which your reviewer takes exception I have gone to both sources.

If, when he has finished studying the Zohar, Mr. Damon will consult Max Heindel's "The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception," issued by the Rosicrucian Fellowship (page 518), he will be told that "in the thirteenth century a high spiritual teacher . . . founded the mysterious Order of Rosicrucians. . . ." I suggest also that he consult the index of that book for the word "sex."

C. W. Heckethorn, in "The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries" (vol. 1, pages 219-20), says, "The society is of uncertain origin. It is affirmed by some writers that from the fourteenth century there existed a society of physicists and alchemists

who laboured in the search after the philosopher's stone. . . ." The same writer indicates the phallic nature of some of the symbolism.

Perhaps we can settle the matter by turning to Dr. Sanger Brown's "The Sex Worship and Symbolism of Primitive Races." This work bears an introduction by Professor James H. Leuba, who is an outstanding authority on the history of religions and especially of mysticism. The passage I cite is from pages 84-5 of Dr. Brown's book, in which he relies on the authority of Hargrave Jennings. "The Rosicrucians," says Dr. Brown, "the Rosicrucians of the Middle Ages are rather better known, though this order also is very obscure. The Rosicrucians as well as the Gnostics had phallic emblems. They worshipped in a form very similar to that under which Priapus was worshipped. Moreover, as was the case with a number of these secret societies, they introduced perverse sexual practices. . . ."

Your reviewer has one further count against me. "The witches, we are told, organized to continue, ignorantly, the worship of Priapus." Probably "we are told" this in "The Story of Superstition." If the reader cares to turn to page 270-1 of my book he will find that the reviewer has made a mistake. What I said was—not that the witches were organized—but that there did exist such a thing as an organization known as the Witches Sabbath, and that there was such a thing as a witchcraft tradition. This certainly does not mean that there is "something in" witchcraft. Doubtless the scientific explanation of much that came out in the sorcery trials may be subsumed under the head of hysteria. The fact remains that there was an organization known as the Witches Sabbath. And by the way, Dr. Brown describes this society. He relies on the authority of R. P. Knight, "Worship of Priapus."

I mentioned above a half sentence which aroused the ire of Mr. Damon. Perhaps it will mean more to the reader if I quote the entire sentence. "The Rosicrucians during the Middle Ages indulged in priapic ceremonies, and there were other such sects, including an organization known as the 'Witches' Sabbath'."

The simple fact of the matter is that "The Story of Superstition" was written as a popular outline of a subject that I have found interesting. My book was addressed to those who are unfamiliar with the subject itself, and it is not documented. However, it contains a bibliography to help those readers who would like to pursue the matter further.

PHILIP F. WATERMAN.

An Open Question

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

Your Compleat Collector of June 1 quotes for its great wisdom and unusual sanity a note from a bookseller's catalogue, of which the kernel is "surely, it is the order of issue by the publisher that counts, and not the order of printing. No one can say in what order the sheets would be picked up by the gatherers, sewed by the sewers, bound by the binders, delivered to the publishers, or issued by them to the booksellers. It is the last point which is important to the collector." Then it is explained that the particular book in question is of the first issue if the fore and lower edges are partly trimmed, but second issue if they are entirely wholly trimmed or wholly untrimmed.

Now if a satirist wished to ridicule book-collectors, could he invent a fiction that would produce his effect more strongly than this actual pronouncement? How can the order of issue from the publishers to the booksellers be of greater interest than the earlier or later condition of the type from which the book was printed (in the case in hand, the presence or absence of an "o" on page 365) except on the hypothesis that the collector is just the sort of being that the satirist conventionally alleges him to be?

STEVEN T. BYINGTON.

Ballard Vale, Mass.

Graduate Study Again

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

Surely an intelligent mean exists between the disillusioned Graduate Student who wrote in your July 20 issue, and the Pippaesque University of Washington chap (Aug. 17 issue) who thinks all is lovely with our graduate schools except a few students. The theory of the Ph.D. in English is not sacrosanct, despite Professor Jones's understandable irritation with a sophomoric complaint, and it could stand an airing in the name of literature.

Professor Angell's article in your issue of June 22 concluded with a magnificent program for our universities, with such phrases as "think independently for themselves," "large liberty of action," "acquaintance with large germinative ideas," "how the human spirit expresses itself in the most purely creative moods" (italics mine), "discover and call out whatever powers they may possess for really creative achievement." I do not know whether this was to be limited to undergraduate students, or not, but I think I am not entirely unjust when I suggest that some graduate students may have shrugged their shoulders at a baccalaureate flourish, somehow incompatible with many, many phases of the process of snaring a Ph.D. Many graduate students must have the feeling of dismissing such phrases until later—until they may be freer to strive for a little *understanding* with all their getting, a breath of insight with all the footnotes.

Nor is Graduate Student entirely wrong when he intimates that given a choice between original texts and collateral bibliography, it is safer under many a professor to neglect the former. "Credits is credits." True, a graduate student should not have to be told to read; but he had better read what he is told to.

There are, let us admit it, graduate students of unquestioned calibre who pause at times and regret the slow atrophy of one-time creative impulses, and who, in their bitter moments, point at the pedant with depleted vitality and say, "There go I." For a graduate student needs above all vitality, patience, obedience, and money. Ability will not compensate for the lack of these, whatever the catalogues say.

There is a suspicion abroad in some quarters that research training taken seriously, unfits for teaching. If there is any truth in this, it, too, should be taken into consideration in President Angell's "We are bound by whatever methods to secure more creditable results than we are now achieving."

We advise Graduate Student to play the stoic and plug away—or quit.

TEACHER AND GRADUATE STUDENT
Chicago, Ill.

And Again

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

Somewhere, among my Myersonian "Irrationals" are hundreds of letters I have wanted to write to the *Saturday Review*. But I am forced to concrete expression by "Graduate Student's" Letter of July 20.

For this young man, instead of giving the advice, is himself in sore need of some. He complains that his postgraduate work in literature stresses works *about literature*. Just how does that prohibit a serious student from reading the sources? Surely curiosity alone should be enough to prompt him, especially one who is aroused to desperation. If, after hearing lectures from learned professors, and after reading thousands of pages of literature, as most of it is, *about the masters*, he is not so imbued with the fever of reading all the original writings of these Masters, he is out of his true element. He could stop after reading fifty pages of "Moby Dick." Impossible! The man doesn't breathe who could stop anywhere but at the "finis" of Herman Melville's masterpiece.

I, too, am studying for the Master of

Arts Degree in English, and as a result, am living on the heights. What a privilege to sit in the classes of a fine English scholar, who can direct you to the best authorities, who gives you his own valued opinion, and who quotes choice bits of the masters. What a delight then, to read the Masters further, get their spirit, live within them! And, O keenest of pleasures, to match your own mind with those established authorities on the Masters, and to discuss your reactions with your interested professor at the next session.

Those two courses, English literature and American literature, have created an insatiable desire to read, read, read. And he who has an appetite *must* get food. Lack of time? Some people call me busy. For I manage my household, do my own washing, cleaning, mending, sew all the clothes, including coats for my little daughter and myself, and teach school and attend college three hours a week.

I simply had to pass some of those joyous messages on, so I've been giving talks to the Woman's Club, which I organized and served as president. The subjects cover art, education, and literature, in turn, as I have been studying them. For a while I wrote daily accounts of a Better Homes campaign I was managing in three newspapers, then later limited myself to weekly accounts, including a book review of the new novels that reached our library. And by the way, it takes two hours each way daily between my school in New York City and my little Jersey home that is such a healthful, happy playground for my little girl. There you have it! I do a great part of my reading and writing while commuting. I study poetry while doing the dishes. Lack of time? Time is what *you* make it. Einstein assures us of that.

And I never miss one inch of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, which is a liberal education in itself, and to which I am indebted for arousing thirsts for reading I *must* quench.

Come, graduate student, be thankful for those researchers—Lewis Mumford and Emil Ludwig among them—don't be immune to the contagion of reading. You'll find time for everything but disappointment. For one moment you'll be declining in the west of Spengler, another, you'll be exploring the nature of the physical world with Eddington. Once you'll be sailing on Poe's Nicæan Bark, then migrating with Whitman's muse from Greece and Ionia to the fresher land of Emily Dickinson, Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson, etc. What a glorious adventure is in store for anyone who takes the little time required of the vast infinite.

To misquote my favorite, Goethe,

*Glücklich allein
Ist die Seele
Die liest.*

GRADUATE STUDENT.

College of City of New York.

A Bibliography

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

I have just read with great interest, in the issue of August 3, the editorial, "In Memoriam, 1914," and the article, "The Anniversary," by Frank H. Simonds.

It may interest your readers to know that a bibliography of fiction, poetry, and drama that encourages world peace is to be published this coming year by the F. W. Faxon Company in the three issues of the *Bulletin of Bibliography* and is also to be printed in pamphlet form. It is being prepared by a group in Baltimore, consisting of Professor Jane F. Goodloe of the Department of German in Goucher College, Miss Grace McCann of the Department of Romance Languages, Mrs. Raymond P. Hawes of the staff of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and myself. It is to be an annotated bibliography, each item being accompanied by a brief descriptive comment. There is to be a general introduction and also a prefatory note for each national section. We are trying to make our list as inclusive as possible, for we believe that the very number of books written with the hatred of war as their theme is impressive. But we also intend to indicate those books which, in our opinion, are of permanent value. We are limiting the bibliography to books published since 1900.

We should be very glad of any suggestions from you or your readers of titles that should be included.

ELIZABETH NITCHIE.

Goucher College.

An Esperanto museum—the first of its kind in the world—was opened recently in the National Library in Vienna.

The Dutton Prize Book for September

THE BEAUTIFUL YEARS

By Henry Williamson

A new novel by the author of THE PATHWAY!

THE SAME VITAL BEAUTY AND LITERARY GENIUS WHICH CHARACTERIZED "THE PATHWAY" ARE AS CONSPICUOUS IN MR. WILLIAMSON'S NEW NOVEL. IT IS A SENSITIVE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF FATHER AND SON—ONE OF THE MOST SYMPATHETIC STORIES OF CHILDHOOD EVER WRITTEN, TOLD BY A CONSUMMATE MASTER OF MUSICAL PROSE. AT ALL BOOKSTORES, \$2.50

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The New Books

The book listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Art

EVOLUTION OF ART. By RUTH DE ROCHEMONT. Macmillan, 1929. \$6.

Bravery is usually admirable—but too frequently it has its roots in ignorance and insensibility. Brave indeed is a book that carries the title "Evolution of Art." For some time an interested public has wanted to know what Art really is, to say nothing of an explanation of its evolution. At last that public is to know. Here are words which will explain how the material, thought, and inspiration of creative imagination have produced architecture, painting, sculpture, tapestries, ceramics, and all the numerous manifestations of esthetic impulse. And not only shall the teaching have to do with production, but with the changes and adaptations of the material, thought, and inspiration to new outside forces such as politics, commerce, and religion. All this the title leads one to expect. As the preface states, there have been unsuccessful attempts to do this before. The present volume must be ranked with the failures. Vague generalizations, art jargon, feeble sentimentalism, and a handy literary background are the elements employed throughout the book. Loose thinking and loose construction prevail. Here is found a limited collection of emotional reactions, unrestrained by any sense of historical or esthetic criticism. It is only fair to let the book speak for itself.

At the end of the preface a general summing up of the aims of the "Evolution of Art" is given as follows:

Not all of us have either the time or the inclination to be connoisseurs or even amateurs, but the busiest of us may find refreshment and inspiration in taking, as it were, a bird's-eye view of the great panorama of art throughout the ages, noting its eminence, its far-spreading pleasure grounds, its forests of cooling shade, and its cascades of the living water of beauty.

Belles Lettres

THE PROFESSION OF LETTERS, A Study of the Relation of Author to Patron, Publisher, and Public, 1780-1832 By A. S. COLLINS. Dutton, 1929.

This is a continuing volume to Mr. Collins's "Authorship in the Days of Johnson." It brings the subject down to nearly the beginning of the Victorian era, when literature became for the first time a considerable profession. "Those who have been the greatest in the practice of letters have rarely been those to whom letters was their supporting profession. . . . In the fifty years that followed the death of Johnson, only one truly great man lived (Southey) whose whole estate was in his inkstand." No such statements could be made of the fifty years after the death of Scott, or of the fifty years again succeeding. The change has come from the growth of the reading public.

The patron mainly disappeared in the eighteenth century. During the period covered here by Mr. Collins the reading public was still not large enough to support a genuine profession. He notes the various movements and enterprises by which the larger public was developed. In a sense the profession was founded by Pope. Between Johnson and Scott the reading public grew very rapidly, with improved communications, industrial change, radical pamphlets, newspapers, and popular education, circulating libraries, literary societies, second-hand-book dealers, and the new policies of publishers. Constable was a man of vision. Murray was more cautious. The founding of the *Edinburgh Review* was revolutionary, the sale of Scott's novels unprecedented. By 1832 both writers and readers were multitudinous, and the fact had much to do with the Reform Bill. The demand for popular information was already immense. The public had altogether superseded the patron.

Mr. Collins presumably has at least one more volume under way, and his history of the rise of the profession of writing in England will be one of the valuable works in the cultural history of our extraordinary epoch.

Biography

LOKI: The Life of Charles Proteus Steinmetz. By Jonathan Norton Leonard. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.75 net.

JOSEPH ESTLIN CARPENTER. Edited by C. H. Herford. Oxford University Press. \$1.50.

UP ANCHOR. By D. Harold Hickey. Abingdon. \$1.50.

EDISON: His Life and Inventions. By Frank Lewis Dyer and Thomas Commerford Martin. Harpers. 2 vols. \$10.

MRS. EDDY. By Edwin Fraken Dakin. Scribners. \$5.

THE LIFE OF HERMANN M. BIGGS. By C. E. A. Winslow. Philadelphia: Lee & Febiger.

PORTRAITS AND REFLECTIONS. By Stuart Hodgson. Dutton. \$2.50.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT: An Autobiography. New edition. Scribners. \$2.50.

THE LIFE OF LADY BYRON. By Ethel Colburn Mayne. Scribners. \$5.

LATER LETTERS OF LADY AUGUSTA STANLEY. Edited by the Dean of Windsor and Hector Bolitho. Cape-Smith. \$3.

THE FARINGTON DIARY. By Joseph Farington. Edited by James Greig. Doubleday, Doran. \$7.50 net.

STAGE FAVORITES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. By Lewis Melville. Doubleday, Doran. \$6 net.

JOHN BROWN. By Oswald Garrison Villard. Doubleday, Doran. \$4 net.

NOT ALL THE TRUTH. By Lewis Melville. Doubleday, Doran. \$5 net.

THE MEMOIRS OF RAYMOND POINCARÉ. Translated and adapted by Sir George Arthur. Doubleday, Doran. \$5 net.

LOUIS XI. By Pierre Champion. Dodd, Mead. \$5.

HENRY FORD MOTOR GENIUS. By William A. Simonius. Doubleday, Doran. \$2 net.

THE PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE OF NICOLÒ MACHIAVELLI. By Orestes Ferrara. Johns Hopkins Press. \$2.25.

Drama

LITTLE PLAYS OF ST. FRANCIS. By LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Cape-Smith. 1929. \$2.50.

Several of these plays have been published in separate volumes. In this new edition Mr. Housman (brother to Clemence, not to A. E.) brings them together. Thus united, they make a dramatic cycle of the life and legends of St. Francis of Assisi. There are, in all, eighteen one-act episodes divided in three parts, many of which have small basis either in St. Francis's life or legend. The first part, for example, contains the imprisonment at Perugia, Francis's illness, and his encounter with the leper, through which are woven wholly imaginary and not always relevant incidents. Yet no one should reproach a poet for embroidering—or even ignoring—facts, especially when the author admits his departures from historical events, wisely adding, "History is, indeed, the greatest of all works of fiction: and even its official and contemporary records lead us—and often are intended to lead us—very far from truth."

On the whole, Mr. Housman mingles his facts and fictions excellently. If he omits the traditional ordeal by fire which one imagines would have made a particularly telling scene, he makes the less vivid political-ecclesiastical situation clear and credible. Even the liberty of turning the wolf into a human robber is not without justification. What keeps these playlets from complete success is their language, not their conception. Their author relies too often on stock poeticisms, on epithets and locutions that were lifeless even before Stephen Phillips failed to revitalize them. The tone is both high and flat, and this lack of authentic speech makes the conversations theatrical instead of dramatic. In spite of this, the passages move; a quiet drama, inherent in the theme, unfolds in violence and grows in reverence. It is at least, a recognizable Saint Francis Poverello that emerges from the overornate pages.

LYSTRATA. By Maurice Donnay. Translated by William A. Drake. Knopf.

EASTER AND OTHER PLAYS. By August Strindberg. Cape-Smith. \$2.50.

THE CAMEL THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE. By Frantisek Langer. Brentanos. \$2.

NYDIA. By George Henry Boker. Edited by Edward Sculley Bradley. University of Pennsylvania Press. \$2.

HARVEST. By Oakley Stout. Longmans, Green. \$1.50.

THE NEW SPIRIT. By John F. Volkert. Meador. \$1.

LOVE AND THE VIRGINS. By Charles R. Jury. Oxford University Press. \$2.

Fiction

SATAN AS LIGHTNING. By BASIL KING. Harpers. 1929. \$2.

An air of solemnity broods over this novel. The late Basil King had a message for his reader, the message that joy only comes when we have cast evil out of our lives, cast it out so that it will fall into deepest oblivion—just as "I saw Satan as lightning fall from Heaven." Although of course unable to read the author's mind, we believe that the narrative was meant to be first of all a demonstration of this thesis, and only secondarily an entertaining or an artistically satisfying novel.

The story is of a young man, born into

a good New York family, who served a term of almost four years in state's prison. A companion in youthful check-raising ought to have been given a like sentence, but he evaded all punishment. On coming out of prison, this Owen Hasketh had in his mind only the fixed purpose of revenge against his former friend; ignoring his family and his proper social circle, he makes a wholly fresh life for himself. The gradual attrition of the revenge motive as the dominating force of his life and the resulting increase in his peace of mind forms the main thread of the narrative. This is not a very substantial plot for a full-length novel, but Basil King manages, chiefly by the introduction of a vivid background and by the use of one or two entertaining secondary characters, to sustain our interest in the fortunes of Owen Hasketh.

The novel is sincere, serious, and earnest, but as entertainment it does not approach first rank. As a thesis novel it is tolerably convincing, maintaining its poise, indulging in neither screaming nor false emphasis. Probably the excellent pictures of New York will go a long way towards making the book worth while for many readers; others will find cheer in the message of possible freedom from the domination of evil.

HOUP LA! By CROSBY GARSTIN. Stokes. 1929. \$2.

In what is almost a throwback to the picaresque novel, Crosbie Garstin tells of a hilarious, wholly implausible chase across three continents after nothing in particular. Bill, the protagonist, is a typical story-book Englishman, wearing his monocle with careless skill, issuing incessant Wodehousian wisecracks that are never truly bad, and conducting himself under all circumstances with the beautiful efficiency of an ocean liner. There is no plot whatsoever to "Houp La!" but we don't care particularly. Bill, who is really a genuine British earl, rushes hither and yon, stirring up trouble and then trying to look innocent; when he gets amorously entangled with an indigent circus we see the book running at its best. Mr. Garstin must have known that circus somewhere; it is altogether too good not to be true. The faults of the novel are clearly visible to the naked eye, but its gay good humor and the true comicality of its characters and episodes make us very willing to look the other way. Novels like this one contribute much to the gaiety if not to the significance of vacation days. No one can go far wrong if he chooses "Houp La!" for entertainment.

THE BOOK OF BETTE. By ELEANOR MERCEIN. Harpers. 1929. \$2.50.

Eleanor Mercein continues in this novel the story of the Urruty family of the Basque country which she began in "Basquerie." In this book she chronicles the bridal quest of the quaint Eskualdunak sister-in-law of Emily, the American heroine of "Basquerie."

Mrs. Mercein-Kelly weaves her plot with sophistication, which implies, among other things, a dry humor. The action, invariably proceeding with hysteric tension, she uses economically to delineate the unique contours of her characters, Spanish grandee to Romany rye. Her style, although so deeply immersed in the *patois* of her scene as to require a glossary, captures, perhaps because of this, the sparkle and romance which result from the marriage of her saga to the folkways of the setting.

The book is concerned entirely with character, *genre*, and action. No ideas, no philosophy, dusty or otherwise, set themselves apart from the characters. The result is a document of human interest, of cinema type, with no other purpose than to amuse—a purpose which has an inevitable connection with art.

THE BLACK CAMEL. By EARL DERR BIGGERS. Bobbs-Merrill. 1929. \$2.

Charlie Chan is an original and interesting detective. We wish that Mr. Biggers had given him a more juicy murder to work on than that in "The Black Camel." This rather prosaic and uninspired tale takes place in Hawaii, where a visiting Hollywood star gets murdered just before a dinner party. All the guests are suspect, and not until the last chapter do we find out who did the deed. We were not so very stupid, at that, for Mr. Biggers is just on the border line of not playing fair with us. Do not detective-story ethics demand that the criminal be somewhat under our noses through most of the narrative? But perhaps we are carping. After all, Chan is the really interesting thing in the novel, keeping it alive many times. Better detective stories have been written, stories more lively, more adroit. And yet this will do well enough for the casual reader.

THE MAY DAY MYSTERY. By OCTAVIUS ROY COHEN. Appleton. 1929. \$2.

This tale seems to us a thin and callow specimen of mystery fiction. A disreputable senior of a Southern co-educational university is murdered in his fraternity-house room, the circumstances of the crime suspiciously involving four other students, two

(Continued on page 98)

A Best Seller
Everywhere

THE GALAXY

By SUSAN ERTZ

An immediate success, Miss Ertz's fine novel promises to be more widely read even than "Madame Claire." "Remarkably dramatic. Laura is a memorable creation" (New York Times). "A best seller" (Chicago Tribune). "Vivid, exciting" (New York Herald Tribune). "A triumph" (Boston Herald). "An achievement" (New York World). "Brilliant" (Philadelphia Inquirer).

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