

does not attempt to conceal them—how these infant prodigies like Master Burke and Jean Davenport annoy him! He writes gossippingly, vividly, always mindful that the theatre was but a part of the social life of the time, ready to quote Philip Hone's diary or any other material which will place the actors or theatres more clearly in their period. He makes you see that if Fanny Kemble seemed harsh to Americans of her day in her judgment of the country, it was but tit for tat. Philip Hone, after meeting Ellen Tree socially, wrote as superciliously as Fanny Kemble at her worst that he found the actress "intelligent, modest, and agreeable, and wholly uncontaminated by her profession."

Out from these volumes comes much that is characteristic not simply of the theatres but of the time itself. Obviously, conduct in the theatres was far more Elizabethan than now. Audiences, disgruntled at this or that, refused to let actors or actresses in disfavor have a hearing, and frequently even fell to rioting. And how our fathers did love melodrama in the 'thirties and 'forties. These volumes make clear that the new drama of the day in which authors like Montgomery Bird were testing themselves was either spectacular secondary romantic plays or melodrama so pure as to seem today almost burlesque.

Professor Odell does not readily accept traditional statements as to his period. Instead, he examines all the available contemporary criticism. Often he thus readjusts estimates, showing that a later day has imagined rather than reported accurately. And what good criticism he finds for us in the press of the time. Listen to this admirable comparison of the acting of Placide and Reeve.

Placide is a sterling representative of the oldest and best school of English comedy—Reeve is the personification of the manners of the day which characterize the very lowest orders of society. Placide's range of parts is diversified and of great extent, embracing every class of society, from the gentleman to the ploughboy, from the English nobleman to the French perruquier, from the pompous chamberlain to the drunken gardener—and wherever the emotions of the mind, and modifications of the passions are in question, he is their interpreter; Reeve's range of parts is very limited in its kind, although it comprises the delineation of the outward and tangible features of the many individuals of that kind, from the beggar to the street-sweeper, from the parish-beadle to the shoeblack, from the low tapster to the tipsy scavenger. Placide always gives you his author, Reeve always gives you himself. Placide is the delineator of character, and Reeve of manner. Placide draws his inspiration from the heart, while Reeve only gives you the outward man, and catches merely the salient points of humour appearing on the surface. Placide correctly and touchingly portrays nature, Reeve burlesques it. Placide can draw tears as well as laughter, Reeve keeps his audience in an eternal broad grin. . . . Placide could not play Jack Ragg, Reeve would be supremely ridiculous in Lord Ogleby. . . . In short, Placide is a *comedian*, Reeve is a *buffoon*. Each is supreme in his own province, and, as far as we know anything of the stage, he has no competitor. . . . To judge Mr. Reeve fairly, one should see him often. . . . His figure admirably aids the expression of his features and motions; it is ponderous and burly, and seeing him what he is, his agility and graceful dancing, are surprising. He is a capital vocalist, and acts his songs, as well as sings them.

—*The Mirror*.

As may be expected, Professor Odell finds something in his researches to make the stage innovators of today go slowly in their assertions that they are creating novelty. On June 11, 1836, *The Mirror* says of a performance of Miss Medina's "Rienzi": "The grand triumphal *entrée* into Rome, over the pit, and out through the centre boxes, has never before been attempted in this country, yet it was done with perfect ease." Professor Odell writes:

here is the Winter Garden (Reinhardt, for that matter) runway, apparently eighty years or so before that runway flowered in the minds of Winter Garden directors. I can only repeat that I am amazed, as amazed as I was to learn of Benjamin Webster's use of curtains and screens in the mounting of "The Taming of the Shrew" at the London Haymarket, in 1844. Verily, youngsters who are daily making such wonderful discoveries in stage-craft should take a course in the history of the Theatre.

Is it fancy that toward the end of Volume IV, as he emerges triumphantly from the increasing detail of his work, Professor Odell sounds a little weary? If he is, let him take heart, for the readers who have admiringly and delightedly followed him thus far will surely exact from him a keeping of the seeming promise of his last words in Volume IV. "The reader, appalled by thought of the sandy tracts through which, at times, he has been reluctantly led, may be encouraged by glimpses of fair horizons in the near future. Within a decade or less he will be delightedly attending performances by the great stock companies that exalted among us the names of Burton and Wallack." For these fair horizons, all lovers of the stage who have read these four volumes must eagerly wait.

## A Woman in the Tropics

SARAH SIMON: Character Atlantean. By HERVEY ALLEN. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1929.

Reviewed by O. W. FIRKINS

"SARAH SIMON" is enjoyable poetry. One signal advantage is that it offers us poetry without poeticism. Poetry ought to "fall out," to occur, to arise, less by anybody's will than as an incident to a poetical mind's honest and careful dealing with a given subject. Diligence, prevision, cannot be omitted. Labor must precede birth in bodily and mental things alike; but whether the result be boy or girl, be prose or poetry, should be left to the unbridled volition of the gods. In describing Mr. Allen's "Sarah Simon," I should begin by saying that it is a tale and a drawing; then I should add, "It is poetry." Had I said "verse" instead of "poetry," that would of course have been a condemnation.

Sarah is a real woman in a tropical island, an aged negress, more genuine than her Gauguinesque surroundings, more genuine than the trimmer and slim-



ZELIDE

From the drawing by La Tour in the St. Quentin Collection (now in the Louvre).

mer, half-caste and quarter-caste, descendants of her commerce with a Cornish seafarer, James Trevlock. Sarah is honest, and, in the main, honestly felt and drawn. She recalls Mrs. Peterkin's latest heroine, but Scarlet Sister Mary, though equaling Sarah in independence, is a more equivocal and meretricious figure. Mr. Allen, as has been hinted, likes narration for its own sake; he would be a horseman if he were not riding Pegasus. The right adjective for his poetry is not so much *high* or *sweet* or *flexible* as *sound*. He often gets the right word, and he handles this right word with an unpretending authority, a careless proprietorship, which marks the robust and unaffected writer.

Quotation, the only justice to a poet, is almost always more or less than just; let me cite, however, several detached lines: "Blowing through cedars from the open sea"; "Till the white morning poured in through the door"; "The waves down in the cove began to lisp"; "Outside the tireless fury bugled on"; "Scarlets that please the sun-filled tropic eyes"; "There stirred the silent wraiths of summer air"; "Thunder amid the thirsty hills, and rain"; "When pharos, camp, and theatre are still"; "When tracteries of cellars mock the moon"; "The lazy smoke . . . drifted its hazy plume into the sky." I should add that there are regrettable moments—only moments—when the poet parts company from metre and from melody alike.

Mr. Allen has a bad preface that talks of "environment" and "characteristic" and "factors," and my chief quarrel with his poem is that he has not been able to keep this preface from prowling about in the neighborhood and peeping in here and there through the windows. Sarah not only evokes images in his mind; she awakens thoughts and criticisms of other people. He tends to cast her more or less into the mould of these criticisms; he even shares his own critical intelligence with Sarah. This is brotherly and openhanded, but Sarah is the kind of woman whom obligations disoblige. The perfect

incident in the book, at once striking, sufficiently probable, and pregnantly symbolic, is Sarah's entrance into the little Christian church in "a scarlet gown, an Indian *palimpsest*," with legends of the god Siva in its pattern. That is true and right; but when Sarah recognizes her own case in King Lear's, when she makes for herself a religion that might have found its credo or its canticle in "Tintern Abbey," we seem to see Mr. Allen in the part of missionary prompting a hopeful but unready convert.

## A Spectacular Statesman

THE LIFE OF ALCIBIADES. By E. F. BENSON. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1929.

Reviewed by ALFRED R. BELLINGER  
Yale University

ATHENS of the fifth century B. C. is an episode of human history of which the world is never likely to grow weary, and, as long as people care more for brilliance than for stability, Alcibiades is sure to be the most attractive figure in the latter half of that century. We are well informed as to his character and works, chiefly by Thucydides, who wrote as his contemporary, and by Plutarch, the professional biographer, to whom the fifth century was already ancient history. No one, perusing those two sources, could fail to have a vivid impression of Alcibiades, favorable or otherwise; but, of course, the readers of Thucydides and Plutarch are no longer common, and Mr. Benson has decided to publish a biography combining the evidence of antiquity with the inferences which he thinks may fairly be drawn from that evidence.

Now the first question that presents itself is "How far should such a biography be supplemented by imagination?" And this is a question of considerable importance. Alcibiades is exactly the kind of person whose mental processes one longs to know. He was a *roué*, a spendthrift, and a traitor, yet he exerted an almost magic fascination over his contemporaries. For these facts we have plenty of evidence, implicit or explicit; but for the actual emotional texture of his life we must rely largely on our imaginations, and their contributions are, of course, fiction.

Either the fact or the fiction might dominate: Mr. Benson has tried to hold the balance even, and the result is neither a good novel nor a good biography. It is not a good novel because the fiction is too scanty and generally too slight to add very much to what is contained in the historical sources or to create a character which is a true work of art. Moreover, the style is repetitious and hyperbolic and sometimes cheap. We are told half a dozen times that Alcibiades advised the fortification of Decelea; the superlatives in the language not sufficing, the word "supremest" is created, and "superbest" (!); and it is charitable to suppose that such a phrase as "the Bolshevik committee (the Council of Four Hundred!) must commit hari-kari" is due to haste of composition.

On the other hand, the effort to make the reconstructed personality of Alcibiades the focus of Greek history for the second half of the fifth century has led to serious distortion of the evidence. Something like justice is done to Nicias, but Lamachus, Demosthenes, Theramenes, and Thrasybulus receive the scantest attention; Antiphon and Clean are practically ignored. All this would be pardonable were it not for the repeated assertion that the history of Greece is the history of Alcibiades. Perhaps as a means of proving this (but surely an unsatisfactory proof) incidents external to his life are treated not only briefly but carelessly. The capture of Pylos is referred to, but never explained; we are never told what happened to Lamachus, Alcibiades's colleague on the Sicilian expedition—he simply disappears from the pages; no glimpse is given of the politics of Syracuse, so brilliantly illuminated by Thucydides.

And what is the purpose of all this concentration of the limelight? It is to prove that Alcibiades was not only a spectacular man, but a great one. That is a stand which reflection will not justify. What claim had he to greatness? We may dismiss him as a leader of troops: he is not known to have commanded in any first class engagement on land. His naval record begins in 410 and lasts for three years. In that time he won two battles, one of them, that at Cyzicus, being of great importance, and the fact that his opponent was a second-class commander

ought not to count against him. But it certainly does not put him in the class with Conon or Lysander, to say nothing of Themistocles. Still, he might have been a great strategist without necessarily being a great commander. The episodes on which we must judge him are, the Sicilian expedition, the fortification of Decelea, and the campaign in the Hellespont. The first is generally believed to have been his own scheme; Mr. Benson considers it a magnificent one. Setting aside the demonstrable fact that it was Lamachus's plan of campaign and not Alcibiades's that was the sound strategy, there remains the fact that he had neglected the elementary duty of informing himself about the country he was planning to conquer. With all his designs against Sicily, Italy, and Carthage, as a prelude to the domination of the whole Mediterranean, he had absolutely nothing but hopes to go on for the accomplishment of the first, essential step; the conquest of Syracuse. Such a man may be inspiring, but he is not a great strategist, not even a passable strategist. The fortification of Decelea, to which he urged the Spartans after his exile, was, indeed, a great blow to his native country, practically making Attica outside the walls uninhabitable. But it can hardly be credited to him as a great original idea, for he told the Spartans frankly that all Athens had been afraid of it ever since the war began. After his reconciliation with Athens, he conducted a campaign which resulted in opening the straits from the Black Sea to the Ægean. It was then that he won the battle of Cyzicus. He fortified several points on the Bosphorus and Hellespont and took four cities, one by surrender after a blockade, one by immediate surrender, and two by treachery. The result was that grain could come again from the Black Sea to the harbor at Athens, and, though there are some who feel that the benefits would have been more lasting if he had won back Eubœa and reduced Decelea, we may grant that he did excellent service, and cancel his Sicilian errors with something to spare. But when Mr. Benson says "No detractor could point to any patriot of whatever age who served his country with such unique and brilliant success" he can hardly expect to be taken seriously.

It is sometimes maintained that Alcibiades was a great diplomat, but the sad thing about all his diplomatic ventures was that they came to nothing. The alliance with Argos had no effect whatever, yet we are told that, considered in itself, it was a superb piece of statesmanship. This is strange language, for statesmen, of all people, are judged not by intentions but by results. The plan for a great alliance in Sicily and South Italy had borne no fruit at the time of his exile and, so far as our evidence goes, never would have borne any. He twice offered Athens the aid of Tissaphernes but never got it, and the treaty with Pharnabazus was checkmated by Cyrus. It may have been his misfortune that his plans miscarried, but a diplomat *all* of whose plans miscarry—!

Yet, if it be a legitimate claim to greatness, it may be admitted that he made great trouble for all concerned. Italy, Sicily, Greece, and Asia all had to thank him for an immense expenditure of blood and money. For he did control affairs. That fascinating, irrecoverable personality, seldom effective for real achievement, was very potent for evil, and, if his enemies feared him, to none did he work such ruin as to his native land. It is all very well to say that he was unjustly accused, to call him the King of Hate, and offer neurotic explanations for his services to Sparta, but the plain fact is that his treason was unpardonable, and particularly outrageous in a disciple of Socrates, that noblest of patriots. Alcibiades, so far as we can judge him, was as charming a man as ever lived, but there is more of the greatness of Greece in his contemporaries, the Maidens of the Erechtheum, than in his whole lurid career.

## Five Years

(Continued from page 1187)

the-Month Club, the Literary Guild, and the other similar organizations that have followed in their wake, have made the last three years a period of lively controversies and interesting issues. They have accomplished much in a short time.

Five years more and who shall say what the *Saturday Review* may find in the world of literature? Perhaps by that time book clubs, publishers, and editors between them will have made books as popular as sporting extras. But then we shall have reached the millenium as well as our decennial.

## A Theory of Color

COLOUR AND COLOUR THEORIES. By DR. CHRISTINE LADD-FRANKLIN. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1929. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HARRY HELSON  
Bryn Mawr College.

THE author of this book is, in the reviewer's opinion, one of the most remarkable women America has produced in the world of pure thought. While she may be best known for her theory of color, which forms the subject of this book, she has made contributions to logic and mathematics and is more than familiar with what is going on in the various sciences, especially as their findings have a bearing on vision. Her wide interests are probably at the bottom of her insistence that any theory of color must account for all the facts, whether they concern the vision of the lowly insect or man, whether they come from the physical or psychological laboratory. She is probably one of the five or six people in the world competent to discuss the facts and theories of vision with a proper grasp of the numerous problems involved. Certainly she is one of the very few who can tell both physicists and psychologists (who often stand at opposite poles regarding their treatment of the facts of vision) "where to get off," and this she does in a piquant, yet forceful manner. For it is notorious that physicists neglect important phenomena of color known to the psychologist, and psychologists are seldom acquainted with the apparatus and methods used by the physicists when they work with light, hence their mutual neglect each of the other's work. Dr. Ladd-Franklin steps in boldly between the two, armed with facts and logic, demanding that all the facts be given a hearing.

This book consists of the papers published by the author in various journals over a period of thirty-seven years. It also contains a foreword by C. K. Ogden, editor of the series in which it appears, a chapter from Woodworth's "Psychology" wherein he states his preference for the Ladd-Franklin theory, and articles by Niefeld and Israeli. While we are told that "this book is one continuous argument against the color theories of Helmholtz and Hering," it is really more than that for it contains a wealth of interesting fact and observation, the reddish-blue arcs, for example, as well as expositions and criticisms of other theories of vision, notably the theory of Schanz which is not readily accessible in English. The title of the book should not, therefore, mislead anyone for the range of topics discussed is concrete and broad. Probably the best way to comprehend the numerous facts of color vision is through a consideration of theories, for theories are short-handed devices for summarizing facts, and, dealing as they do with fundamental facts, they serve to orient the reader in an otherwise bewildering array of material. The subject of color and color vision becomes, in this book, a most fascinating subject for scientist and layman alike. The explanations of charts given in an appendix, the glossary of important terms, the indices, and a certain amount of repetition of salient points all help to make the book clear to those uninitiated into the mysteries of vision. The eight or more charts are masterpieces of composition and reproduction; they are probably the most complete and beautiful set of plates having to do with color vision to be found in any one volume. Both author and publisher are to be congratulated upon having gone to the trouble and expense of including them in the volume.

It is hardly necessary to state here in detail the theory which forms the main *point de repère* of the book. Suffice it to say that the Ladd-Franklin theory attempts to account for the evolution of the color sense from its beginnings to man. It assumes that in the first response to light a primitive light-sensitive molecule responds in such a way as to give the sensation of white, or gray. In the course of development this molecule undergoes cleavage, the two components giving blue and yellow. A second split in the yellow component gives red and green. Working backwards, if the red and green molecules are stimulated simultaneously we get the original sensation, yellow, while if the blue and yellow (or blue, red, and green) molecules are stimulated at the same time, we get the sensation of white. In this way the author can account for the fact that a certain red, green, and blue will give white as well as blue and yellow. The presence or absence of

certain of these cleavage products in the eye is held to explain the facts of color mixture, the various types of color blindness, "zonal" blindness in the normal eye, the vision of animals below man, and a number of other phenomena perhaps less well known, such as contrast, after-images, and the like.

A number of supposed facts still held by philosophers, laymen, and, alas, scientists, are shown to be errors in this book and although they were first pointed out by the author years ago, many people still cling to them. For example, it is commonly held that normal individuals can have no notion of what the world looks like to the color blind individual. The existence of semi-defectives, people color blind in only one eye, gives the lie to many a philosophical structure reared upon the supposed privacy of our sensations, for these people have been able to compare vision with the normal eye with what is seen by the defective eye and so we can actually gain a tolerable idea of what the world looks like to people with certain types of color blindness. Again, it is commonly taught in the class room that rods and cones differ in structure as well as in function. But except for their basilar terminations there is no difference in structure between them. Finally, we may mention the fact that, as Dr. Ladd-Franklin so often insists, red and green when mixed give yellow, and not white or gray,—although most psychologists still preach the "vanishing" theory of red and green. It is true that lately it has been found possible for spectral red and green to give gray under certain conditions, but they seem to be the exception rather than the rule in spectral mixing.

While the reviewer cannot subscribe to the author's applications of her theory to the facts of contrast and after-images, it would take us too far afield to discuss these questions here. He cannot refrain from pointing out, however, that in her treatment of "black" which has been the bugbear of color theory, she ascribes this positive color (psychologically regarded black is as good a color as red or blue) to a resting state of the visual apparatus. But the best blacks are seen not when absolutely no stimulation is present (as a purely physical view of black would lead one to assume) but when there is plenty of light around an unlighted object, that is, when conditions are present for contrast effects. The explanation of black would therefore have to be sought in the mechanisms responsible for contrast effects in general. When no light reaches the eye what is seen is *gray*, a fact which Hering and the psychologists have been insisting upon for years against the physicists who regard black as the absolute absence of stimulation. But since Dr. Ladd-Franklin's explanation of black appears more as an adjunct to than an integral part of her theory, we may accept the latter whether or not we accept her explanation of black.

The extraordinary vitality of the Ladd-Franklin color theory is attested by the fact that it has been capable of a variety of formulations, changing as the progress of science has demanded change. Originally it was stated in terms of "molecules," later specific dyes were pointed to as possessing properties required of the light-sensitive molecules, and latterly it has been stated by Dr. Ladd-Franklin in terms of electronic and atomic activities—yet no new assumptions have crept into the structure of the theory which logically remains the same as when it was first formulated. Certainly in the field of color and color theories she has no peer.

Isaac Newton's Library of 858 volumes is to be sold *en bloc* in London. Twenty of the books contain his autograph.

## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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