

## The New Books

## Juvenile

(Continued from page 12)

down to the national period. This fact gives the whole volume an old-fashioned air which the old cuts and plates with which it is liberally illustrated harmonize. Most youngsters of today are probably more keenly interested in events in the United States since 1860 than in the events of colonial life. But Mr. Coffman has, if we accept his design, performed his task fairly well. The book is of course in no sense a history, being simply a series of historical sketches. But these sketches are written with vigor and color, while some of them are conspicuous for their honesty. It is made plain that the Tories were an honest and respectable group of men, and a little later the young reader is carefully instructed that "most Southern masters were fairly kind to their slaves." As is proper in a volume for elementary consumption, great emphasis is laid on the history of outstanding personalities, and such men as Franklin, Washington, and Lincoln are treated at length. It is a thoroughly healthful and useful book. Its paragraph on the horrors and waste of the World War, and its word in behalf of the League of Nations, are worth special commendation.

## Miscellaneous

**HISTORY OF COOPERATIVE NEWS-GATHERING IN THE UNITED STATES.** By VICTOR ROSEWATER. Appleton. 1930. \$3.50.

No hint of the dramatic character of this scholarly but far from dry-as-dust volume is conveyed by its sober title. Toward the end of his long and animated story the author speaks of "passing in review the successive advances from rowboat to radio"; those last four words outline the picture. The first innovation in the gathering of news in this country was made in 1811 by Samuel Topliff, Jr., a youth of twenty-two, who, being placed in charge of the "Marine and General News Book"—not a newspaper, but a book in which was posted the latest information obtained from incoming vessels and which was available at the Exchange Coffee House in Boston—signaled his change of occupation from sailor to clerk by the unsensational but momentous stroke of hiring a rowboat with which to meet arriving ships instead of wait for them to come in. This step, although provoking no rivalry at the time, was prophetic. Twenty years later there was something like a newspaper-boat war in New York. Topliff's little craft was a symbol of the keen competition for gathering and publishing the news which was not only to spur individual newspapers but to create huge press organizations and send them into costly struggles for supremacy.

Those organizations and their struggles—struggles with natural difficulties as well as with one another—are the subject of Mr. Rosewater's pages. The first organization was formed in New York in 1847, but the next year it was merged with a much more important one which bore the name Associated Press and which was dominant despite opposition for nearly fifty years. The present organization of the same name is an outgrowth of a vigorous rival, the Western Associated Press. The complicated history of all these organizations, including the old United Press and the one now flourishing, is set forth by Mr. Rosewater with conscientious accuracy and scrupulous fairness. His book is an invaluable contribution to the history of American journalism.

## Philosophy

**ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHY.** Edited by T. V. Smith and W. K. Wright. Open Court. \$3.50.

**THE ETHICS OF THE SHULHAN 'ARUK.** By Dr. Isaac Spector. Tacoma, Wash.: Wraitha Publishing Co. 1930.

**SEFER HA-IKKARIM.** Book of Principles. By Joseph Albo. Translated by Isaac Husik. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

**SOME LIVING ISSUES.** By Robert E. Speer. Revell. 1930. \$2.50.

**THE DANGERS OF OBEDIENCE.** By Harold J. Laski. Harper. \$3.

**THE REVOLT AGAINST DUALISM.** By Arthur O. Lovejoy. Dutton. \$4.

**A CALENDAR OF DOUBTS AND FAITHS.** By William Marias Malisoff. New York: G. Howard Watt. \$2.50.

**THE PSYCHOLOGIST KEEPS HOUSE.** By Edwina Abbott Cowan and Laura Thornborough. Minneapolis, Minn. \$2.

**CHILD ADJUSTMENT IN RELATION TO GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.** By Annie Dolman Inskip. Appleton. \$3.

**PILOTING YOUR LIFE.** By Joseph Jastrow. Greenberg. \$3.50.

## Religion

**A COLLEGE MAN'S RELIGION.** E. M. WAITS. Stafford Lowdon. 1930. \$2.

The title of this book raises hopes which its contents do not satisfy. One might expect a symposium at worst or at best the log of a curiosity tour through American colleges with a view to finding what the horn-rimmed generation thinks, if it thinks at all, about religion. Unluckily, though, we have here a series of sermons and addresses. The first one has to do with the Apostle Paul, whom the author presents as a college man of early days, and hence the title. Mr. Waits is President of the Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, a school as redoubtable in its football strength as Southern Methodist. If his sermons are not particularly rich in contemporary interest they are at least sprinkled with good humor and served in a winsome manner. It is easy to believe that freshmen and upperclassmen would listen to them willingly enough but it is hard to believe that an older group of graduates would take the pains to read them. They do not, on the whole, express a college man's religion any more than they express a banker's.

**AN HOUR ON CHRISTIANITY.** By LLEWELYN POWYS. Lippincott. 1930. \$1.

Beautiful prose and plain-spoken prejudices do not make fair history. Mr. Powys is the observant novelist in a difficult rôle of historian. But he does not have the historian's sympathy with variant positions. The charm of his book is that it is not "church history"; it is "What Mr. Powys Thinks about Religion in General and Christianity in Particular."

For one who knows his "church history" this book should prove irritating and therefore stimulating. For any others, as an introduction to the subject, it is misleading.

The surprising feature is its high estimate of Jesus. Most of the time Mr. Powys is laying about him most disrespectfully. But to Jesus he pays continual tribute. "No man has been less blinkered than Jesus, less spiritually blindfold" . . . Jesus "not for a moment lost the integrity of his inner being."

**THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF TODAY.** By Richard Roberts. Chicago: Willett, Clark & Colby. \$2.

**THE COLLEGE STUDENT THINKING IT THROUGH.** By Jessie A. Charters. Abingdon Press. \$1.50.

**CREATIVE PREACHING.** A Series of Lectures Delivered before the Boston University School of Theology, October, 1929. Abingdon Press. \$2.50.

**THE BIBLE IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE.** By Eugene Franklin Reese. System Bible Co.

**WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.** By Archibald Thomas Robertson. Vol. II. Richard R. Smith. \$3.50.

**THE GOODY FELLOWSHIP OF THE PROPHETS.** By W. Mackintosh Mackay. Richard R. Smith. \$2.

**JESUS AND THE LAWS OF MOSES.** By Bennett Harvie Branscomb. Richard R. Smith. \$2.50.

**LITTLE BOY OF NAZARETH.** By Edna Madison Bonser. Richard R. Smith. \$2.50.

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**ORPHEUS.** By Solomon Reinach. Liveright. \$5.

**RELIGION IN THE AMERICAN COLLEGE.** By Edward Sterling Boyer. Abingdon. \$1.25.

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**PRE-EXISTENCE AND REINCARNATION.** By Wincenty Lutoslawski. London: Allen & Unwin.

**THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING.** By Ernest Fremont Tittle. Holt. \$2.

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**WHAT IF HE CAME.** By Garfield Hodder Williams. Richard R. Smith. \$2.

**IF I WERE GOD.** By William J. Robinson. Freethought Press Association.

**CAN THESE BONES LIVE?** By J. Worsley Boder. Smith.

**THE PURPOSE OF JESUS.** By Campbell N. Moody. \$1.50 net.

**ST. AUGUSTINE.** By Eleanor McDougal. Smith. \$1.50.

**THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS.** By Bertram Lee Woolf. Smith. \$2.50 net.

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**THE BUDDHA'S GOLDEN PATH.** By Dwight Goddard. London: Luzac.

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## Protest of an Old Timer

By JOHN BENNETT

THE world of books and graphic arts is suffering from a mania, the basis of which is either ignorance or conscious fraud, yet may be only extreme ill taste.

We are over-run with decorative designs and illustrations which are simply devilishly crude and damnably ugly, which mar a book by their obnoxious presence; by so-called "wood-block designs" so foreign to the real genius of the wood-block, and remote from the intention and soul of a book as to resemble a bull in a china shop.

Set the dealer in prints aside, to expiate his own sin.

Of course the "wood-block design" is not the only offender; the offense has many forms.

Anything which looks strange to the young editor and publisher, or different from anything he has seen before, puzzles him and deludes him, or persuades him, being shrewd, into thinking that the foolish public may be diddled again by bunkum and claptrap. And in nine cases out of ten he is right, absolutely right. There is, in the United States, a vast, uninformed mass of readers and buyers who hardly know their right hands from their left in the matter of illustration and decorative design, and may be seduced by the loud reëchoing blurb and by a fancy brand on the bottle: "From wood-block by Noodleby," "Decorative designs by Catchbooski," or "A Book without Sense, by Ferenc Dumkopf." And the more strange and foreign the design and the designer the more impressive does the fraud appear to the innocent and the easy, just as a variant cologne-water or essence attracts a richer and more deeply parvenu trade if one label it "parfum." Gods of our fathers, if there be such curious divinity, what fools we mortals be!

Anything will do for an illustration, whether it illustrates or not: it may be a figure-piece more nearly resembling a rickety clothes-horse, or a load of grass in a gale, houses which tilt and topple defiant of all perspective or gravity, cock-eyed women, smear-faced men, scare-crow drawings, and aimless meanderings of a floral sort which have no more connection with the text or intention of the book than this piece has with the paintings of Fra Lippo Lippi or Fragonard.

In representational art we are fallen to the dogs: as silly as school boys of ten, to whom any distorted face upon a fence does duty for humor or portraiture; we have paraded as caricaturists men whose sole claim to distinction is that they draw things grotesquely inhuman, mockingly ugly and irrational; and editors print them, believing them humorous. Humorous? My god!

It may be alleged by those irritated by these comments—if any are—that I, myself, have done bad humorous drawings. I am sorry that editors printed any drawings of mine which had no claim to genuine humor and relied alone upon ugliness for point. But I do not think my own work eminently great; my drawings have their merit in their place; and I am well aware of several faults, but I love and appreciate good work done by other men, better draftsmen far more entitled to the name of artist than I am. That is one of the pains of appreciation: to know and to admire the fine work of other men far more than one may his own. I am happy to say that I do. I have in my own way done what I might within my limitations, and am subject to all criticism.

But I miss from books and magazines drawings of distinction and true graphic art. I do not mean photographic realism and meticulous representationism; but illustrations and drawings which illuminate the accompanying text, if presented with text; or add a visual richness to any mental presentation of an idea, be it simply an ornamental head- or tail-piece, a border, or small cut printed in the text.

But to put an ornament, or a so-called ornamental border upon a page, inappropriate in every way, and to present it as an added attraction, an increment of happy

value, to offer as illustration pages of shocking stuff, miserably conceived and worse performed, and without one iota of illumination, rather offending, by misrepresentation and distortion, all sense of attributive humanity, passes all sense, and almost passes decency: it is a cheat, an indecency, and a fraud: some know it, but think it smart; some do not know, but hope to be thought knowing and "informed"; some do it because the rest have done it; so the vicious circle goes.

"Peasant art" is bad enough; yet a false peasant art has vast popularity; men who apparently can actually draw well, draw coarsely and ill to go down to the popular level of the millions who follow avidly the so-styled humorous strips; others, who cannot draw at all, suffice in ugliness to amuse the school-child intellect of what Mr. Mencken labels the bourgeoisie and booberie—terms which include many levels of American society.

But that there should be few truly good illustrations, few truly good decorations upon the printed page, only mad rot and bunkum, is a sore thing to some few ancients like myself, who long for a return of reasonableness.

It is quite true that a madman may be a brilliant artist; several whom the world acclaims have been mad as hatters; but to make mad drawings does not make an artist of a dauber and a dub, nor make his product excellent.

To make careless, intentional, insane, grotesquely distorted figures and objects, to twist the world awry and upset the arrangement of the heavens, to pretend to be an African Bushman, for the sake of being "primitive," and to foist off so-called "primitive art" in the most unfit and inopportune places, is to throw a pot of paint into the faces of a still-surviving few who admired James McNeill Whistler and enjoyed his gay battle with John Ruskin; who love the indigenous arts of the Maori, in their own right place, and the beauty of the Persian, the native genius of Chinese and Japanese arts and crafts in the places where Oriental arts and crafts are fitting and true. These last are fine, not primitive arts.

The primitive arts of primitive people, as practiced by themselves, are perennial delights; the fraudulent imitation of primitive arts by sophisticated races is damned folly and fraud, except as a primitive art may be a guide to simplicity; otherwise such performance is obnoxious in the extreme.

What I think upon this matter will make little or no difference to editors and publishers; but I have been pushed against a dirty wall, scrawled with schoolboy designs and faces, and inscribed with schoolboy brightness; and I protest against a flood of inanity and ineptness being presented as "art" and "illustration" and "decorative design." Hokum!

The poor "damned public" will run after anything which makes noise enough and paints its wagons yellow and red, and harnesses a painted zebra, and calls it a "unicorn."

There was, thirty-five years or so ago, in some literary and publishing circles of New York, a society called "The Roaring Lions," founded by that quiet and greatly talented fellow, my old friend, Tudor Jenks, requisites to membership in which were these, that one should not be "a lion," and if, by unavoidable circumstance, one were compelled to be a lion, that he should roar as little as possible.

The society of Unicorns, which, I understand, some gentle jester has organized, has another tenet; since it is physically impossible for any unicorn to wind his own horn, each and every unicorn secures the services of a brother unicorn who blows his horn for him, in return for a like favor; thus there is maintained a continuous and systematic horn-blowing among unicorns.

There would appear to be some such arrangement of mutual and systematic horn-blowing among the critical and creative parts of the artistic world—that is, the illustrative and literary producers of the metropolis—which a good friend of mine will insist on calling "the metrollopus."



For I perceive men who, by their very speech, know nothing whatever of the problems and processes of graphic art, voicing erudite opinions and praise of most indifferent wares, with as suave and self-complacent an air as if to appreciate graphic art in its every branch and to talk of it wisely were simple as saying one's A B C.

Similarly, children who have not yet experienced enough of life to form a wise opinion of it, are ready to expound the purposes of literature and humanity, and to approve the most bastard forms of illustration as if they personally had long weighed the full achievements of the past, and rejecting the dross and the grosser particles of earth, had retained in their minds the richest siftings of the authentic metal, and presented to their hearers nought but the golden grain. Yet faced with actual demonstrations of graphic art in its simplest illustrative form, black-and-white, for use in books and magazines, for itself as beauty, or as illustration, and illumination, or explanation of a text, their judgment is utterly at fault, and the world of books is flooded with abortive efforts at "originality" and at "primitiveness" and "the expression of personality" when the personality so expressed is feeble and ineffectual, unbalanced and uninformed, inappropriate and unbeautiful, and the "originality" is only a difference from all precedent, found as when one ditches his car.

I am not angry about it. In my own youth, perhaps later—youth is after all, a comparative term—I was, and have been, very many kinds of a fool. It is the high privilege of youth to be self-confident, conceited, and quite mistaken. Without doubt

I, too, exercised these privileges to the full in my own time.

But I am grown impatient that so long this foolish search for novelty, for anything, anything, just so it be "different" from any previously accepted creative effort, should be put upon the purchaser of books and prints.

A plain text is better than bastard decoration, unwisely applied, and conceived in ignorance of what truly constitutes beauty, humorous grotesquery, ironic caricature, or primitive simplicity.

It is bad enough in its own way to see the pages of reviews disfigured by the creation and revival of monstrosities of type for the sake of black-faced words, screaming or bawling, so loudly as to compel attention to the offered wares, like so many barkers in an old-fashioned street fair or circus-ground, purveying "Circassian beauties" from Mott street, and "Tattooed men," daily painted in the dressing-tent, or like the loud-mouthed vendors of nostrums on street corners in country towns on stock-sale days a half-century ago.

Type forms forgotten and thrown into limbo seventy-five years ago for their vicious disregard of proportion and creative worth, have been re-struck, and splash the page like a shipping clerk's reckless daubings. Type forms which had wisely been forgotten by a more sensitive realm of printers, and were to be found surviving only in the pages of dead publications of mid-Victorian days, or in the street signs of British Hong Kong in all their deformity . . . have been dragged out of their tombs and paraded as a new method of soliciting attention by their very outrageousness and dif-

ference from the moderation of a well-designed type-face.

These things are the substance of my protest, and I am catholic in my likings. I appeal—no doubt in vain—against this era of the outrageous and ugly presented and proclaimed as worthy examples of graphic and typographic art.

Men seem to be content to be damn fools in order simply to be different. In writing thus I may, myself, be a damned fool; but it is not just to be different.

I should have been either a farmer or a carpenter, in both which occupations I have proved skill and sense; but fate, over which I had little dominion, made me something of a draftsman, something of a writer, and not so much of either as I could well wish. But the long observation of one who was many years a printer, a newspaperman, and a manufacturer of patent medicine cuts,—sixty years of observation, estimation, acceptance, and rejection,—persuades me that the young and uninformed are often both cocksure and mistaken; and it is a pity that we who are, perhaps, deemed by younger generations moribund old-timers, should have little consideration paid to our appreciations and tastes.

To escape from listlessness, monotony, and lifelessness, we have leaped at times into madness and folly. I know that the pendulum will swing back again to some happier medium; I perceive that it has already begun to swing, and that, also, there are still to be found here and there hidden, creative pendulums of typography and graphic art that have never swerved from the steady beat of admirable production. But since life

grows short, I have sometimes, as herein, grown impatient with inelegance and crudity paraded wilfully or honestly as a pleasure to the eye.

Let the few old-timers like myself, before we pass out, have things well done and worthwhile to look at, and somewhat diminish the roaring flood of bastard graphic art, whose examples wash up on the tide of publication like empty bottles, grape-fruit rinds, and decaying remains of rejected life along the New Jersey shore, washed up from the New York barge-dump off the coast.

I reproach the beautiful and proud city of New York with this,—that it barge-dumps the United States with its fruit-rinds, empty bottles, broken crates, and putrescent rejected life, and too often presents it as an added attraction to the mental seabeach of the nation, and not as a desecration and a detriment to joy.

For this I hold the great City guilty, and its undoubted might misused; or, if not the very City itself, by some figure of speech, some metonymy or synecdoche, I forget which, that for the sake of vivacity presents the part for the whole, or the container for the thing contained. If the suspicion be in error, pardon it for my cause.

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