

## The Mob Spirit\*

KING MOB. By FRANK K. NOTCH. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1930. \$2.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

THE author writing under the intriguing pseudonym of Frank K. Notch is, we are assured by the publishers, "an experienced writer." The experienced reader needs no testimony to this effect other than the author's own work. From the first to the last page "King Mob" reveals the deft hand of the literary craftsman. The fluent yet forceful style with its tempered wit and restrained denunciation—the style of a scholar who is also a man of the world—would alone suffice to give distinction to the book. Furthermore, the author possesses a high and austere taste and a keen-edged logic. He knows, one suspects, the classics intimately; he is well read in history and philosophy; if his knowledge of recent physics seems, like that of most of us, to be derived mainly from Eddington, he turns his Eddington to good account. He is very much alive, very alert.

The significance of "King Mob" lies in two things: first, in its attempt to derive the manifold evils of the present day—standardization, mass production, propaganda, inner emptiness and outer restlessness, nationalist hysteria—from one fundamental principle; and, second, in its endeavor to prove that what are usually considered to be efforts to remedy these evils are really only further examples of them. The fundamental principle is that modern civilization is controlled by the spirit of the mob which is defined as "a group of persons unable to think straight because they are affected by the consciousness of their own numbers." The modern mob, apparently, includes about nine-tenths of contemporary society. Its recent endeavors to "get" culture and the recent endeavors to "give" it culture threaten traditional human values with extinction. They ignore the very meaning of true culture which consists in inner development by means of discipline, the slow moulding of character by intense controlled experience. They try to seize as if it were a material thing a spiritual quality which must be wooed through a lifetime, not won in a day.

Catering to this tendency, according to Mr. Notch, are the Book Clubs, such publishers as Simon and Schuster, such popularizers as Durant and Van Loon. The public is constantly being panicked by the number of sales into an acceptance of mediocre work. There has developed an attitude for which only that is real which can be measured. In its attack on human personality the mob acts as a natural force. Nature knows nothing of spiritual values: she cares only for the species, not the individuals; her only standard is the mob standard of measurement. "The human impulse toward spiritual creation works in the teeth of a vast, crushing conspiracy which extends through every aspect of the physical universe." The mob has joined this conspiracy; "sport" is its analogue for the struggle to survive in nature.

Owing to the largeness of his field, Mr. Notch is forced to neglect many fair targets for his barbed arrows—our rotarianized colleges and churches, the pest of "conventions" which descend upon our cities like swarms of obscene insects, the fact that we cannot any longer produce even a man-sized individual criminal but merely the eternal "gang." Ignoring such trivialities, the author proceeds to the more important demonstration of the sinister influence of the mob spirit in fomenting race hatred and national wars. In the course of this demonstration he gives illuminating emphasis to the difference between indigenous local patriotism and the senseless modern cult of nationalism. He dispels the notion that scientific inventions offer any easy escape from nationalism. The increase of communication in recent times has served only, he argues, to produce a world mob which offers no security for world peace but in which all the characteristic evils of smaller groups are universalized. And yet, in the end, Mr. Notch strives manfully to avoid utter pessimism. While admitting his indebtedness to Spengler in tracing the decline of western civilization, he refuses to accept Spengler's conclusion. Spengler thinks we are hopeless and counsels resignation; Mr. Notch thinks we still have a fighting chance and counsels rebellion.

Our civilization promises to make the question of a living easier and easier; and meanwhile living becomes emptier and emptier . . . Now that we can substitute the slavery

\*In connection with this review see the Open Letter on page 1148.

of nature for the slavery of man, the art of living should spread among the many. Instead of that, we are deliberately forgetting it. A restoration of the art can begin only through the individual. We cannot serve humanity unless we make much of the man, and unless we rescue the individual we cannot help mankind . . . Machine, State, and Nation . . . must exist solely for the benefit of the individual.

However unsatisfactory the "humanist" dualism between man and nature which Mr. Notch adopts, however overdrawn the war which he depicts between the cultured few and the uncultured many, however captious his condemnation of particular writers and popularizing agencies—and his work invites criticism on all these counts—nevertheless, on the main issue "King Mob" strikes home. If Mr. Notch is weak in his analysis of causes, he is strong in his perception of aims. His program for "The Rescue of the Individual" is one to enlist the allegiance of every liberal.



THE LONG, LONG TRAIL, by J. N. DARLING  
From "Roosevelt: The Story of a Friendship."

## Two More Anthologies

TWENTIETH-CENTURY POETRY. Edited by JOHN DRINKWATER, HENRY SEIDEL CANBY, and WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1930. \$5.

A JUNIOR ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD POETRY. Edited by MARK VAN DOREN and GARIBALDI M. LAPOLLA. New York: Albert & Charles Boni. 1930.

Reviewed by ALFRED KREYMBORG  
Author of "This Singing World"

IN "Twentieth-Century Poetry," an anthology of British and American poetry, the editors, John Drinkwater, Henry Seidel Canby, and William Rose Benét, have made an admirable contribution to a field already rich and almost over-ripe in anthologies. The many modern collections compiled during the past two decades have increased the labors of subsequent editors. They must sway an audience surfeited with anthologies, and produce new volumes, fresh in their viewpoint, content, and appeal. Happily, the twentieth century has introduced out of its own tumult, and carried over from the closing years of the nineteenth, a large body of excellent poets, varied and individual, and is now adding the adventures of the youngest generation. Furthermore, present-day editors have a clear advantage over their predecessors in the important matter of perspectives. Poets who have been over-praised and poets who have received a niggardly reception or none whatsoever are susceptible of balanced judgments on the part of critics and compilers. The wise editor, now more than ever, is an umpire who attempts fair play inside the boundaries of his temperament, and claims neither perfection nor finality for his selection and its prefaces and comments. His work, in any event, will be incomplete. His integrity will force him to state that his immense labors, concentrated between two boards, have made a mere sketch or outline of the poetic currents and movements of the century. It is thus with the present volume and its editors. They have approached their task with love, skill, and restraint—a little too much restraint in Mr. Drinkwater's case. The American editors have taken more chances and shown more catholicity than their British colleague. The author of "Abraham Lincoln" is not inhos-

pitable to experiment in poetry, and to the apparent waywardness of iconoclasts and pathbreakers. But he is cautious, very cautious, about admitting such explorers to the section over which he presides. Any anthology, it seems to me, should close with a few examples at least of the tendencies in poetry; and I feel the poetry of D. H. Lawrence to be more than a tendency. Other English absentees from the volume are Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, and the parading Sitwells. Even if one dislikes such people, they were or are representative of definite phases in romance and experiment. It is needless to repeat that the movements we now term classical, were romantic in their time. But one cannot repeat too often that an editor should examine and re-examine his temperamental doubts even more than his preferences. Mr. Drinkwater, despite his experience and courtesy, has inherited the British habit of forcing a man to make good before he is completely acceptable. Often, all too often, the man has to die to make good. One does not ask a critic to be lenient with his contemporaries. But a little more daring and willingness to err should reside in his heart, though the heart lead his head astray.

Mr. Drinkwater's selection has been divided into four groups: "poets who have established themselves before 1900, but have continued to write in the new century"; poets too old or well known "to be eligible for Mr. Edward Marsh's Georgian anthologies"; poets who were included in those anthologies; and lastly, poets who have arisen since Mr. Marsh's scheme was completed. Part I opens with Hardy and closes with Yeats, and includes Bridges, Francis Thompson, Alice Meynell, Kipling, A. E. Housman, and A. E. Part II contains Michael Field, T. Sturge Moore, Doughty, Belloc, Chesterton, Masefield, and Noyes. The Georgian group, the largest of all, and the one contemporaneous with our national renaissance, contains Davies, De la Mare, Hodgson, Abercrombie, Gibson, Drinkwater, Bottomley, Monro, the war poets, and Stephens, Freeman, and Gould. The last part contains but six poets: Charlotte Mew, Frances Cornford, J. Redwood Anderson, Humbert Wolfe, Charles Williams, Peter Quennell. Quennell is the only young poet in the British section. This delightful daredevil was born in 1905. In every instance but one (Charles Doughty), each poet is represented by two or more poems forming groups that give the reader an embryonic impression of individual gamuts. These gamuts are skilfully revealed by the editor and are introduced by pithy biographical and critical notes. Limitations of space hamper Mr. Drinkwater (as they hamper all anthologists) when it comes to the writers of epic verse and poetic drama. Doughty is limited to a scene from "Wayfaring to the Valley of the Dove," while such poetic dramatists as Hardy, Yeats, Masefield, Bottomley, and Flecker have to be confined to the lyric phases of their work. This is particularly regrettable in the case of Gordon Bottomley, whose exquisite dramas deserve a growing audience.

The American editors have divided their section into seven parts. The parts are not as arbitrarily arranged as the British section, nor does the arrangement enable the reader to study the subtle relationship among our poets in a natural order throughout. Adhering to a seven-part scheme, the editors might have divided our poets as follows: Forerunners of the national renaissance, poets of the renaissance (divided into two groups: the workers in the old forms, and the Imagists), poets of the Southern renaissance, poets of the Western ballad, and poets of the younger generation (divided into two groups: the realists and the metaphysicians). These divisions are hinted at in the book, but the demarcations are not outlined with sufficient clarity. In Mr. Benét's fine foreword, it is stated: "Richard Hovey was, perhaps, the most salient poet before 1900, in which year he died." To Hovey's name might be added the name of the pioneer Stephen Crane, who likewise died in 1900, and most decidedly the name of Emily Dickinson. Though she died in 1886, the immortal tippler was discovered by and indubitably belongs to the present century, and might well have opened the second half of this volume.

The section opens, as it otherwise should, with William Vaughn Moody. Part I contains as well, Woodberry, Markham, Sterling, Torrence, and Miss Guiney, Miss Reese, Miss Branch. Part II contains Robinson, Frost, Sandburg, Lindsay, three of the Imagists, Eliot, Jeffers, and Sara Teasdale, Edna Millay, Elinor Wylie, Lola Ridge, Léonie Adams. Part III contains Leonard, Ficke, Oppenheim, Untermeyer, the elder Benét, Bacon, and Mrs. Con-



klings—Part IV, Allen, Auslander, Stephen Benét, several humorists, and a group of the younger metaphysicians—Part V, Fletcher, Aiken, Bodenheim, Stevens, Williams, Cummings, Marianne Moore, Ransom, MacLeish, Hart Crane—Part VI, Neihardt and Sarett—Part VII, Edwin Ford Piper, two Southern ladies, and four negro poets. The book closes with James Weldon Johnson's "Go Down Death."

The American editors have been generous in their selection, a generosity tempered by critical insight and integrity. The prefatory notes to each poet's group are more elaborate than Mr. Drinkwater's. They are brilliantly written little essays, colorful, dynamic, stimulating. The volume's strongest appeal lies in the opportunity for enjoying and studying side by side the leading British and American poets of the century. It has been made very clear in Dr. Canby's general preface "that no estimate of the relative values of British and American poetry has been intended. . . ." This temptation has been silently left to the reader. I do not feel that a man is plunging into a competitive game and rooting for the home team when he ventures the opinion that recent British poetry is more traditional than American poetry, and American poetry more adventurous. This has become a truism.

It is more important to discover, for ourselves at least, that most of the American poetry in this volume could have been written nowhere else than on native soil.

Our poets of the nineteenth century, with the exception of Emerson, Whitman, and Dickinson, still leaned too heavily on English traditions. None the less, much though we pride ourselves on the great variety and originality of the poets of the national renaissance, we owe the first steps in our indigenous march (and what profound steps they were!) to Emerson, and to the bearded Long Islander and mischievous girl who developed the Concordian's independent vision. We can now say with certainty that we have a tradition, though it is less than a century old. This anthology, revealing definite contrasts between cousins who speak and write what used to be considered an identical language, proves that we are an autochthonous race, with ideals and records of our own, a past and future of our own. If it had no other quality, the book would still be worthy of recommendation to British, as well as to American readers. But, all argument aside, it is of still greater value to the lover of poetry, regardless of race or tradition. The book is full of beautiful things which one reads for themselves alone. . . .

Of Mr. Mark Van Doren's "Junior Anthology of World Poetry" little can be added to what has been said about its predecessor. The first volume is vastly popular, and doubtless deservedly so. The Junior Anthology was compiled at the suggestion of Mr. Garibaldi M. Lapolla, of the Thomas Jefferson High School. Mr. Lapolla states that the book "is offered to the ever-growing numbers of children who have in recent years been learning to enjoy the reading of poetry without the mediation of teacher or parent." What a long, long step in advance over one's own boyhood, when poetry, literally forced down the throat, was an absolute abomination! The progress from education to self-education is a healthful indication of growth where growth is most needed. I happen to know from many jaunts about our queer soil how responsive the young are to poetry—providing you let them enjoy it. Only last night, a quiet little human, in his first year at high school, gravely informed me that his four favorite poets are Robinson, Aiken, Fletcher and—well, this could not have happened when I entered high school a little over thirty years ago. In those days, we hated poetry like hell!

Commenting editorially on Robert Bridges the London *Mercury* says: "His perpetual youth of heart and mind was almost unique. What is not so generally known is that this went with a tremendous robustness of character and tremendous physical vigor. Since his death Dr. Bourne has revealed to the world that Bridges was asked, in 1867, if he would stroke the Oxford Boat: and declined, probably without a moment of subsequent regret, on the ground that he was working hard for his Schools, and that his College Boat must consequently content him. At seventy he was drilling with the Oxford Volunteers. At seventy-six he was still capable of walking his thirty miles over rough country, and probably of taking any of his critics by the scruff of the neck and dropping him into the Thames."

## A Gay Novel

VISA TO FRANCE. By BERRY FLEMING. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM

**A** LONG time ago, before Miss Gertrude Stein had descended into her present repetitional obscurity of style, but after she had definitely turned her back on the brief clarity of "Three Lives," she wrote a story about two young women,—Harriet Freen and Georgine Skeen. The essential fact about these two young women, which grew during the story from a mere statement into a refrain, was that they were both "regularly gay." And so it is with "Visa to France." It is a gay book, a regularly gay book, without at all being another of the numerous and depressing "funny" books that appear each year as surely as the vacation season does. This story of the Riviera is based firmly upon the actualities of the lives of its characters and not upon the considered needs of the possible reader; the ironic cross-currents and contradictions which so flavor it, spring from the intrinsic conflicts of human nature and not from an obvious juggling of events and characters for the purpose of entertainment. Mr. Fleming has looked upon his hero, and has pleasantly recorded his findings for us.

Clement Train arrives at Les Planches-sur-Mer typically. He is driving a conspicuous automobile nicely stocked with a servant and with wines bearing the proper marks and the proper years. And he is wearing yellow gloves for which he has paid one hundred and ninety francs *chez Jones* "as a homage to convention," and which he has conscientiously made very dirty, "as a homage to romance." He is an American who has come to the French *plage* looking for a plot for a novel. Here, surrounded by the most complex situations, in daily contact with expatriates of England, Germany, Italy, and America, and with plots beating in upon him with the regularity of the waves along the shore, he spends his days trying vainly to find the person who will make the central character for his story and in the end gives up in irritable futility because he sees no stuff that plots are made on.

This basic irony of a plotless author entirely surrounded by plots gives the undercurrent tone to the whole novel, but the stories within the story, the strange, the amusing, and the tragic little contest that Train misses entirely, might very well stand on their own merits, unaccountable to any central scheme. Mr. Fleming has not gone in for the shocking or the merely reportorial presentation of life in the French "American Bars." He has constructed a novel, created character, and most engagingly commented on life. "Visa to France" doesn't take itself too hard but it should be very gratefully received by a public which does not often get a book of such gay intent so beautifully turned out.

## Crime and Catastrophe

IT'S NEVER OVER. By MORLEY CALLAGHAN. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

**M**R. CALLAGHAN, who has been known as a writer of effective, extremely simple *contes*, has turned to a story in which the psychology is complex and subtle to the point of obscurity. His story begins with the execution of Fred Thompson for the killing of a policeman in a brawl, and deals with the effect of his disgrace and death upon a small group of his intimates;—John Hughes, his friend, Isabelle, his sister, and Lillian, a girl who had once been in love with him, but who was, even before his crime, transferring her affections to John. Of these, Isabelle is the only one who is a force in the story; the other two she does with almost as she pleases. In spite of the fact that Fred's crime had every extenuation possible, Isabelle feels herself hopelessly disgraced, and finds her only consolation in dragging her friends and his into disgrace as well. She succeeds in getting John and Lillian to live together before they can afford to marry, and then when they have reconciled themselves to the scandal and are working out a way of living, she sets out to possess herself of John's body, for no better reason than to get rid of her own chastity and spoil his happiness and Lillian's at a blow.

This is only a part of the story; there are other characters to be involved in catastrophe, there are eddies and cross-currents of emotion and motive, but this is enough to show that if Isabelle is to be

made comprehensible, she must have the most careful and delicate analysis. She receives almost none. Mr. Callaghan tells this intricate story of neurotics in the same manner as his earlier tales of prize fighters, with an entirely external viewpoint and a studied evenness of tone and lowness of key. In "Soldier Harmon" (to take an example which will be remembered as one of the best short stories of the year) this treatment gave poignancy to the simple, straightforward hero, and heightened the pathos by deliberate understatement; in "It's Never Over" it is simply baffling. At first the monotony of sentence structure and careful avoidance of climax have a hypnotic effect, disposing the reader to believe what is related in so matter-of-fact a manner, but before long one grows incredulous in spite of oneself. Mr. Callaghan's style, too, grows positively painful in the longer form. He has apparently imitated the superficial characteristics of Mr. Hemingway's style, the short, simple declarative sentences, generally beginning with the subject, but he has missed the delicate internal modulations (as noteworthy as Milton's variations on the iambic pentameter) with which Mr. Hemingway varies his style.

Nevertheless, though one must call "It's Never Over" a failure, it is the kind of book that shows its author an artist, one who would rather fail at first in a new attempt than repeat an old success. This book has the qualities which won praise for its author's earlier works, their vitality, closeness of observation, and clarity of expression. It fails because its conception is so much beyond anything Mr. Callaghan has attempted in his previous stories that their form will not hold it. His reach conspicuously exceeds his grasp, but that reach shows him of a higher stature than last year.

## Riel's Rebellion

THE HALF-BREED. By MAURICE CONSTANTIN-WEYER. New York: The Macaulay Co. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by THEODORE PURDY, JR.

**T**HE minor and undress episode in Canadian history which is known as Riel's rebellion passed almost unnoticed in the United States, still involved in 1869 in the shadows of the Civil War. Yet in some ways the story of this revolt of a few hundred half-breed French-Indians in the region now known as Manitoba is well worth retelling, and M. Constantin-Weyer's vigorous and picturesque version of it makes, in the main, excellent reading. Not always scrupulous in regard to historic verisimilitude, the author is nevertheless able to present a sufficiently accurate picture of his hero and his surroundings. Louis Riel was clearly a remarkable man, with great personal qualities as leader of his fellow men, yet through the force of circumstances his revolt took on something of a comic opera character, and its final suppression largely by the efforts of a man less admirable but more adequately supported, was no doubt inevitable. The methods of M. Constantin-Weyer, who was the winner of last year's *Prix Goncourt*, are nowhere better shown than in his vivid description of how D. A. Smith (later Lord Strathcona) with the aid of a little whisky and some persuasion put down the rebellion single-handed. The tragedy came later still, when Riel, who had returned to Canada after some years in exile, was captured and hanged at Regina in 1885.

The book is an unusual and interesting one, especially coming as it does from a Frenchman who has wandered far afield in the search for material, and, in this case at least, brought home something worth having. The style is also exceptional, recalling Kipling rather than Gallic models and yet succeeding in avoiding the customary clichés of most romances of the Northwest.

## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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