

## Prelude to "Ultima Thule"

AUSTRALIA FELIX. By HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT B. MACDOUGALL

UNDER the title "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony," this novel was published in the United States in 1917. The edition was small and the public, war-bewildered, was unimpressed. But now, with the title "Australia Felix," the first volume in the magnificent Mahony trilogy is sure to get at least a fraction of the attention it deserves. Those readers who had the fortitude to bear the pity and terror evoked by the tragedy of Mahony's last years as recorded in "Ultima Thule" will turn eagerly to this beginning. In April of this year the second part of the trilogy will be reissued; it will be called "The Way Home." Then, with the complete history of Richard Mahony before us, we can at last estimate its place in English fiction. We expect that discriminating readers will place it on a level with, if not higher than, Galsworthy's Forsyte chronicles; nor are we unreasonable in suggesting that it may be considered the soundest accomplishment of English fiction in the twentieth century. Just now, however, our proper business is the discussion of "Australia Felix."

When we first see Richard Mahony, he is a store-keeper on the Ballarat gold-fields, a young man of twenty-eight, not long since come from his home in Ireland and his medical training in a Scotch University. The seductive promises of easy money and a free life in happy Australia had torn him away from the normal course of his life. Here in Australia he was impecunious and restless, disillusioned and alone. As the pages of the novel pass, we see his marriage, the death of his first child, his tantalizing desire to go back to England and take up his profession, and his final reconciliation to the idea of putting up his shingle in Ballarat, even though he found this community unbearably crude and materialistic. Strangely enough, he prospered for a time and was faintly happy; but then, after a few years, ill-health and growing restlessness made him give up his assured position in the community and leave for England, to him, in prospect, a haven of refuge from colonial coarseness and the Australian climate. Throughout the novel his wife, Mary, is a character hardly less important than Mahony himself; she is patient, plucky, good-humored, capable, altogether the figure of a truly admirable woman. And surrounding these two are a large number of relatives, friends and hangers-on, each one of whom is sharply individualized and fully spread before us. This whole body of minor characters has a cohesiveness, a completeness, that in retrospect is astonishingly effective.

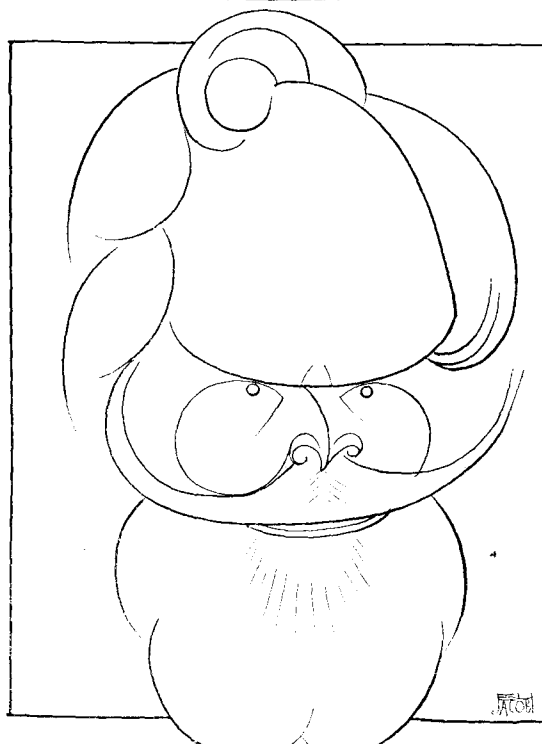
Of course our interest is centered on Richard and Mary. Knowing their final fate in "Ultima Thule," we do not meet them in "Australia Felix" as strangers. Rather, we look at every turn for the traits and tricks of character already familiar to us. Nor are we disappointed. Richard is absolutely convincing here in the early years of his manhood, for we see his unsteadiness, his egotism, his weakness in their beginnings. The Richard Mahony of "Australia Felix" is in every particular the Richard Mahony of "Ultima Thule"—fifteen years younger, less far along the road to catastrophe. And Mary—here she is explained; for her character in "Ultima Thule" was not wholly satisfactory, a minor figure at first, and then at the end the mainspring of the action. But having seen her here (and in "The Way Home"), we sense her proper stature. Altogether, Richard and Mary are superbly conceived in this novel, and they are impeccably unfolded in relation to the following novels of the trilogy. No reader of "Ultima Thule" need fear that he will find the early years of the Mahonys an anti-climax.

The Australia that lies near Melbourne and Ballarat is the scene of "Australia Felix," and the 'fifties and 'sixties of the nineteenth century is the time. Much more than in "Ultima Thule" and in "The Way Home," the background of the novel is of importance. The frantic life of the gold-prospectors, the makeshift manners and morals of the frontier, the gradual emergence of an organized society—these are powerful elements of the scene against which the early acts of the Mahonys' tragedy are played. This careful background shows us that the three novels are a chronicle of early Australian colonial life as well as a history of Richard and Mary Mahony; and by so much they take on an added importance.

If we consider "Australia Felix" as an isolated

novel, it suffers in like degree with "Ultima Thule" from the fact that it is not supposed to stand quite firmly on its own legs. "Ultima Thule" had no beginning; "Australia Felix" has no ending. It leaves Richard and Mary at the start of their ninety-day voyage to England; neither their characters nor their actions reach a proper conclusion. The novel is like the first act of a good play: events have taken place, but their significance is not yet visible; characters have been laid bare, but implicit difficulties and stresses have been neither solved nor relieved. However, in spite of this essential and necessary incompleteness, "Australia Felix" can be read by itself with a good deal of satisfaction. There are no loose ends, except the one great, central loose end of character. Things in general have come to a pause, a lull. The novel could not have been more conclusive without endangering the much more valuable effectiveness of the trilogy as a whole.

Possibly, for the benefit of those who have not yet read "Ultima Thule," it should be noted here that Henry Handel Richardson's novels are not for the reader who wishes to escape from sadness and despair. Rather, this Englishwoman writes for the stout-hearted who would grasp the nettle vigorously, looking neither for uplift nor for consolation. In her work we find justification for the belief that high tragedy is still achievable by writers of this age.



HAVELOCK ELLIS  
A Cartoon by Jacobi.  
(See page 775)

## In the Deeping Tradition

EXILE. By WARWICK DEEPING. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1930. \$2.50.

MR. WARWICK DEEPING has published four novels in the last four years, beginning with "Sorrell and Son" and ending with "Exile." His success has been great and increasing; he has the honor of being a best seller in his own country; he has every right to plume himself a little. His publisher has every right to quote him in a kind of colophon as making the sort of statement that is usually left to the bright impermanence of the jacket: "I believe in the large simplicities, in the human urges at the back of all of us. I believe in love, courage, and compassion." And Mr. Knopf is no doubt right in the deduction that follows: "Herein, perhaps, may be found the secret of Mr. Deeping's success."

"Exile," at all events, is full of these qualities, even self-consciously so. They are displayed to the greatest advantage by the background, an imaginary town on the Italian coast, one of those resorts where only the expatriate Anglo-Saxons are vile. Upon this foil is set Billy Brown, a healthy, capable young Englishwoman. The place tries to cast its spell over her, but one is no more afraid that she will really surrender to it than that Sansfoy will overcome the Red Cross Knight. In the end love, courage, and compassion triumph.

That is of course not the whole story. Mr. Deeping's gifts are great and well-known, and that "Exile" is better written than the run of novels goes without saying. But in this book the author has cut himself off from the full exercise of some of his powers. The Anglo-Italian degenerates are not the sort of characters he has drawn elsewhere so well and affectionately; and the tenderness for his crea-

tures which was so appealing a quality in "Sorrell and Son" would be wasted on "Miss Capability Brown"—a girl who, with her cold baths and competence, makes one understand the people who exiled Aristides because they were tired of hearing him called "The Just." "Sorrell and Son," Mr. Deeping's first successful book, remains his best.

## The Picture of a Woman

ELLA. By ELISABETH WILKINS THOMAS. New York: The Viking Press. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS is a novel that is a picture rather than a story. It consists of seventeen brief passages, hardly to be called incidents, in the life of a woman. Some are important, some trivial; they seem much like the random collection of memories the mind brings up when allowed to wander unchecked. The book suffers from want of design, unquestionably, yet the sum of the scenes makes the reader acquainted with Ella's life, and with Ella. It is uneventful, spent chiefly in schools and colleges, as student and teacher. There are no great tragedies or triumphs, no violent passions of any kind.

There is however an atmosphere of keen emotion, and an indefinable quality that one must call charm. It is impossible to explain, but perhaps it comes from the character of the heroine and her view of life. Ella has one conquering quality, she is always herself. She is not obtrusively individualistic; she has no need to be; she speaks only once of what she calls "my me-ness"; but she always gives the impression of being the same, uninfluenced by any passing force, integral of life. Ella offers an interesting contrast to Megan, in Miss Margery Latimer's "This Is My Body": Megan is always fighting and agonizing, wounding herself and her friends, to be herself and to get at reality; Ella, by some gift of the gods, quite naturally attains both.

For Ella is never stayed by the world of surfaces. To compare small things with great, she has in her degree the gift of seventeenth-century religious writers, "to see the world in a grain of sand, and eternity in an hour." Sometimes this gift is unmistakably exercised, as when as a child she dreams over a fancy-work match-box in the shape of a boat, until the ridiculous toy becomes a type and focus of all the ships that ever were; but more often it is present only as an undercurrent that makes her serene emotions deeper, her tranquil life richer. This is truest of the opening chapter: the passages in which she is still a child are full of the pellucid, magnifying light of Mr. De la Mare's "Memoirs of a Midget." As she grows older, that fades, in some measure, into the light of common day; but enough is left to give the book an extraordinary appeal for sympathetic readers. "Ella" will probably not be widely popular, but will win great admiration from its own predestined public.

## Life on a Farm

DOWN IN THE VALLEY. By H. W. FREEMAN. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1930.

THIS is a simple and idyllically beautiful story of a prosperous English business man, whose parents had "made a gentleman" of him, who was drawn, by little and little, to the farming life his grandparents had given up, fell in love with a rustic lass, and at last settled down in good earnest as a farmer.

The charm is in the telling. Mr. Freeman describes the annual cycle of life on a small farm, without any Arcadianizing or hiding of weariness and bad luck, without any fine writing about landscapes, without any touch of romanticism, and yet makes the hero's decision so inevitable that the reader scarcely realizes that he would have called it unlikely. The physical and philosophic satisfaction, to a man who has been a single wheel in the uncomprehended machine of commerce, of simple, hard tasks that clearly want doing, is vividly communicated. The delights of Vale Farm must have, for American readers more than for English, the pleasure of strangeness: its detailed accounts of plowing with horses and mowing by hand, of marigold pudding and rose conserve, have some of the fascination of that apotheosis of house-keeping, "Robinson Crusoe." For Americans, too, the idyll has the poignancy of impermanence. The small English farmer already seems nearer to the Georgics than to a huge Western wheat-farm; Mr. Freeman's Everard appears as a survivor of the Golden Age, the too fortunate farmer who knows his own happiness.





## Hermione on Humanism

By DON MARQUIS

WE'VE been taking up Humanism in a serious way this winter—my little group of advanced thinkers and I, you know.

It's wonderful . . . just simply *wonderful*!

It's so . . . so . . . well, so *human*, if you get what I mean!

Far more so than Behaviorism. Behaviorism is going out, you know, and Humanism is coming in. Oh, yes, really—the very *best* people—the more *serious* groups, you know—aren't talking about Behaviorism at all! It's just as *passé* as the very short skirts.

Humanism and Humanitarianism are *quite* different. . . . Humanism is far more profound, if you get what I mean. Its wave length is attuned to the larger cosmic rhythms. And after all, that counts, doesn't it? I always say, a person is in accord with the cosmic vibrations, or he isn't; and that's that. And it's the same way with a system of philosophy.

The *loveliest* man told us all about Humanism the other evening—my little group and I, you know. Such sincerity! He made us all see that it was a force we would have to regulate our individual lives by; the dominant intellectual movement of the era, if you get what I mean.

He told us all about the Higher Immediacy and the Lower Immediacy. They're *quite* opposed to each other, you know.

You see the Higher Immediacy is . . . well, it's far *above* the Lower Immediacy, if you get what I mean. More ethical, and everything.

Unless you regulate yourself spiritually by the *Higher Immediacy*, you aren't really a Humanist at all!

I felt so . . . so . . . well, so *purified*, somehow after he had told us about the Higher Immediacy. He has such wonderful eyes . . . so magnetic . . . the lecturer, I mean . . . but *pure*, too!

Every night now, before I go to bed, I look at self in the glass, and I ask myself: "Have I lived in accordance with the Higher Immediacy today? Or have I *failed*?"

Of course, I suppose it is better to be a Humanist and have just merely the Lower Immediacy than to have no Immediacy at all. But the *real* leaders in thought today are Humanists living by the Higher Immediacy.

Isn't Immediacy wonderful . . . just simply *wonderful*!

I don't know whether Humanism can be reconciled with practical Communism or not—of course, it can be reconciled with idealistic and intellectual Communism, for that is on a Higher Plane.

But the question in my mind is whether Humanism is something that should be given to the Masses, or whether it should be kept for a select few.

So often we serious thinkers toil and suffer and sacrifice our lives for the sake of the Masses, and get no thanks at all. Humanism might be a little . . . a little . . . well, *dangerous* for the untrained mind, if you get what I mean. The question is, you know, whether they are ready for it or not.

But it is the only thing that has ever satisfied in me my deep, deep craving for sincerity! There's nothing trivial about it, you know. Don't you just hate triviality?

I'm going to ask Papa to let me do over the house in accord with the new Humanistic Art Ideas . . . there's the *dearest* boy who has gone in for interior decorating who will catch my ideas at once. And I'm having some new costumes made which will express me . . . me, individually, you know, in relation to Humanism.

What I plan is a Humanist Salon! And the decorations and costumes *must* be in accordance with the Inner Idea of Humanism.

They will vibrate in unison with the Higher Immediacy far more than with the Lower Immediacy, if you get what I mean. I think one owes that to one's followers, don't you?—*always* to give them an example of what things can be on the very *highest* plane!

Well, I must run along now! I have a committee meeting in half an hour—some tiresome thing about the unemployed—and after that I must see my modiste and my milliner. Life is just a scramble, isn't it?

## The BOWLING GREEN

### "Produce of Scotland"

GENIUS is this that you suddenly see a thing done as it was never quite done before. You are astonished and at the same time you recognize the rightness of it; you feel pride for the person who was simple and intuitive enough to know that was how it needed to be done.

It must be fun to be rich, one has often thought, for there are so many surprising things that can be done with money; but it is as good as being rich to be able to help a fine humble thing achieve its destiny. In the world of books, if you are lucky and keep your eyes alert, it may happen once or twice a year.

I think it may happen in the case of a book called "Gallows' Orchard," by Claire Spencer, a short novel of a country town in Scotland. I wish it had happened to come to me without the publisher's jacket on it, for to have even the least shadow of knowledge of what sort of story it is may rob you of some of the fine astonishment of reading it. Yet if you don't say something about it, how should people happen upon it?

"Gallows' Orchard" is not just a good book; there will always be an astounding lot of quite good books; books workmanlike, witty, and charming. This is a different kind of thing entirely. It is a Scottish book, and Scots are known to be fey (or is it daft?). It has the absolute quality of Scotland in it: strong and riotous with life as ripe old Scotch whiskey; the sweet gnarly queeriness of Scotch air and feeling. It is as real as a granite crag washed by rain. It is bare suffering, with pity and glamor and pain; it has in it a reading and searching for the shapes and meanings of things. The story of Effie Gallows and her tragedy is told through the person of the young village schoolmaster, and surely one tribute to the author's great power is her instinct of entering into the man's essential feelings.

Perhaps it was best of all to have encountered a book like this on a mystical day in February; one of those premature days of spring when tension is strangely relaxed; when the dangerous sunlight of mid-afternoon lies across melting snow and sodden earth; when even asphalt roadway softens and feels elastic underfoot; when you know the impossibility of ever showing life the tenderness it deserves. You will see new beauty in even the best-known things: the face of an old dog, dust-motes floating in a beam of sunshine, the defiant shape of a locomotive.

"Gallows' Orchard" is a book of such exquisite vitality that it enters into rhythm with whatever life you are living and know is so. It is so much truer and closer to your mind than the morning newspaper that you lay aside those crowded sheets of print to think of the Scotch hillside, the dour house with long grass in front of it, the country fair that is a bitter sweet microcosm of human struggle. Whatever your own desire, joy, necessity, despair or postponement, you perceive the essence of such things more faithfully by the magic of this extraordinary talent. Whether it is Orion marching across the sky or the interesting squashiness of roadside mud, your eyes are brightened to examine. In horrible moments of midnight prudence I stiffen myself against over-praise; there is always the possible danger of a taint of egotism in too fierce and sudden halloo. But the humble, tender, passionate beauty of this fly little book emboldens one against cowardice. Whiskey, and books like this, are what Scotland does best: they burn away dull tissues and blow an ember in the mind.

Casual quotation is a misdemeanor, but I give you three little scraps of quality:

"You look up in the sky and you see a star and you say to yourself, that's a star but that's only a word you're using—"

"It's true," I interrupted, "that words are not the thing itself, naturally; but when you say that 'star' is only a sound, that's true, but it's the sound we use to identify a certain thing that—"

"Yes, but we believe in the star as a word, and between you and the thing as it truly is, there is a mist, and the mist is the sound we have given the thing; it's the sound we believe in, not the thing itself. Mind you, it's all right when we are dealing with things that we know about actually, like this table." And he tapped the table gently with his finger tips. "This is easy; but there are things in life that we know nothing of, really, terrible things if you

think of them, like a 'star,'—the 'sun,' the 'moon'—all monsters—and yet the three things made most of sentimentally. The more grand and terrific are things the sweeter the sound we tag on to them, to describe them; and it's so with everything we know." He sat silent for a while looking gently disturbed; then firmly: "I know no facts in life. I know no sin."

"Sin," said I, "is only the breaking of the laws that are laid down in your country; they are made in the first place for the comfort of most people, and the world after all is but your own house enlarged."

"Aye, that's right! But I tell you, you may know the country you live in, but no man knows what the world is; and how can you break its laws, when you don't know what its laws are?"

The pig in his pen with his nose to the ground, his kindly, understanding eyes darting here and there in sensitive fear, never looking straight at his tormentors, nor avoiding with his hulk the prodding stick. Oh, gentle, kindly animal, of all the tortured creatures in the world my heart suffers most for you, you are like a symbol of the whole tragic existence, the birth, the belly, and the grave. You were born for your size, bought for your size, and slaughtered for your size. All compliment is taken from you, you are allowed no graceful play at forgetfulness, you are treated always to the bare facts of your meaning. You are by virtue of your size given a great hunger, which in its place forces a greater size and a greater hunger, moulding your poor heavy body day by day to the butcher's knife. Oh, I have heard a pig scream in his death agony, I have heard a man, and I know which is the finer. Look some day in a pig's eye, look honestly, and you will see a human eye, but more sensitive and more aware of his doom than most men, and more tolerant of his murderers.

It was fine to be keeping pace with one's nerves, fine to have the wind on my face, fine to be putting distance behind me, to have my actual speed keep time with my sense of hurry. I laughed out of sheer satisfaction; at last, at last I am on my way back to you, Effie! I am running back to you faster than I ever knew I could run. I have strong-muscled legs that force the ground behind me. I felt them as I ran, and I could feel the muscles hard as iron. I laughed again out of happy pride. The air fills my lungs, cold and fresh, and comes out again broad and even. I am like a fine machine, accurately strong, mathematically reckless, ploughing down the road, levelling down the landscape, banishing trees and landmarks as I run, rolling up yard after yard of stone dike. And when I come to your gate I leave nothing behind me; I bring it all to you, every stick and stone, for I have conquered them and slashed them and destroyed them, all to get to you. I have conquered the length and the time that hung between us.

Even in the name of one of the characters "Gallows' Orchard" suggests Stevenson's greatest (and unfinished) last work, "Weir of Hemistoun." And how this book would have interested Stevenson; how enchantingly it transgresses all sorts of technical rigors he would not have allowed himself to snap. Yet I think he, reading in amazement, would have been the first to say that this young writer begins where he was broken off.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Another striking discovery of an early Christian document has recently been made by Dr. Mingana, head of the Manuscript Department of the John Rylands Library, Manchester. The document is known as the "Apocalypse of Peter." References to an Apocalypse of Peter, no doubt the first source of the document, are made by Christian Fathers as early as the second and fourth centuries of our era. The present document dates back, in Dr. Mingana's opinion, as far as the eighth century. Before 1892 only half a dozen fragments were known to exist, but a more considerable one was published in 1901 from a MS. discovered in the monastery of Mount Sinai. This is ascribed by Dr. Mingana to the ninth century. Dr. Mingana who is now publishing the remainder of the complete document has in his possession seven texts, or fragments, of the "Apocalypse," all written in Garshuni, or Arabic in Syriac characters. The seven texts vary greatly from one another, and Dr. Mingana had, he says, to give up the attempt to combine even two of them. He has confined himself to one series of texts only. This series is a big MS. of 194 leaves, ten times the size of the largest of the other six MSS. It contains "Syriac words and Syriac expressions which generally stamp a Christian Arabic composition with a mark of age and originality that is missing in composition of a later date." It also contains passages "which seem to possess an archaic savor."

P. E. N. Club committees have already been set up in London, Athens, Brussels, Cairo, Geneva, Madrid, Paris, and the United States to organize an appeal for a memorial to Rupert Brooke. The cost of the memorial is estimated not to exceed £2,000, and £200 has already been subscribed in Greece. In addition the people of Skyros have offered to provide a block of marble for the base of the monument.