

# by Geo. Macaulay Trevelyan

most educational value for us is, perhaps, the contemporary memoir of passing events, such as Burnet and Clarendon, de Commynes and Froissart. Can a man be said to have had a liberal education in English history if he has never read some at least of the nobler passages in Clarendon? And those magnificent political controversies, if we give them no higher title, conducted by Milton and Burke, are part of the young history student's birthright as an Englishman; to know something of them he may well be expected to spare a few hours from learning so many more clauses of broken treaties out of textbooks.

The universities stand in a more important and direct relation to historical production than in former times. The days have gone by when history was written chiefly by men-of-the-world, publicists, and benefited clergymen, for a leisured class with large and learned libraries in their country seats. Today society has undergone great changes, and the conditions of intellectual production have changed accordingly. History is now written for the most part by men and women who have been trained in history at the universities, and very largely by persons living upon academic endowment; while the serious reading public is no longer the upper or the middle class as such, but clever persons of all classes. The problem of historical writing today is, therefore, to establish a satisfactory contact between the academically trained historians and those who should be their readers, scattered all over the country in various callings and stations of life. It is not altogether an easy task. In old days the writers and readers of history had a common background and common standards—those of a well-educated but not over-learned aristocracy. Today the writers may sometimes be too academic and the readers not academic enough for purposes of mutual understanding. "The writer is one, and the reader is another," says the Eastern proverb.

THE relation of history to education is not less important than its relation to literature, and modern educationalists are making the same demand as the modern literary world. Both schoolmasters and ordinary readers are asking historians not to be merely learned, but to remember the hungry sheep. What are we to say to this demand, and how far, if at all, is it inconsistent with the academic ideals which it is our duty to maintain at a university? The answer to that question will be given in different terms by each of us, and I have no wish to make any pronouncement upon it with any claim to authority or orthodoxy, but only to express some of my own feelings on the subject. It is, of course, impossible for an historian to give too much, or ever enough, time to research, but it seems to me not impossible that he may sometimes give proportionately too much of his time and mental energy to research itself, at the expense of the thought and art that should be devoted to making use of the results of research. We have, as historians, not only to collect facts, but to think about them; and we have also to weave the facts and our thoughts upon them into some form by which others will profit.

There are indeed, and there ought to be, many kinds of historian and many kinds of history. Subdivision of labor is required in history as in other forms of human effort. There are also several kinds of reading public, of which the more select is the more important, but of which none is wholly negligible. Some distinguished historians have deliberately written two books on the same subject, one for the learned and another for a wider class. That is one way of honestly facing a difficult problem. But perhaps the highest ideal of history will always remain the volume that satisfies both the learned and the general reader. There are in fact as many possible solutions to the problem as there are men fit to solve it.

In any case I am sure that historians could not see with indifference the popular presentation of history pass mainly into the hands of others. We welcome the assistance of allies from the realms of literature or journalism, and applaud, while we criticize, their success with historical themes. But their success is a challenge to us, and an encouraging reminder of the growing interest in history among the

educated and half-educated democracy of all classes today. The immediate future is full of possibility and hope for historians, and they are in many different ways rising to the call and to the challenge of the age.

I will say no more of the theory of the question. Atmosphere has more influence on practice than any theory. Let us put the case then in terms of atmosphere. The problem of presenting the results of historical research to the educational world and to the reading public may best find its solution, and is already beginning to find its solution, in an atmosphere such as we breathe in an ancient university; where literature and learning still go hand in hand; where lucid self-expression with the pen is regarded as a necessary part of a liberal education; where intellectual and literary traditions and careful standards of thought and speech are more respected than in the market-place; where historians are not ignorant of poetry and literature, and where students of language and literature are not ignorant of history; where the schools of natural science, by their neighborhood and example, help to keep us historians in touch with the modern world and with the active business of research, discovery, and production, without affecting our own loyalty to the standard of humane letters.

The appeal of history to us all is in the last analysis poetic. But the poetry of history does not consist of imagination roaming at large, but of imagination pursuing the fact and fastening upon it. That which compels the historian to "scorn delights and live laborious days" is the ardor of his own curiosity to know what really happened long ago in that land of mystery which we call the past. To peer into that magic mirror and see fresh figures there every day is a burning desire that consumes and satisfies him all his life, that carries him each morning, eager as a lover, to the library and the muniment room. It haunts him like a passion of almost terrible potency, because it is poetic. The dead were and are not. Their place knows them no more and is ours today. Yet they were once as real as we, and we shall tomorrow be shadows like them. In men's first astonishment over that unchanging mystery lay the origins of poetry, philosophy, and religion. From it too is derived in more modern times this peculiar call of the spirit, the type of intellectual curiosity that we name the historical sense. Unlike most forms of imaginative life it cannot be satisfied save by facts. In the realm of history, the moment we have reason to think that we are being given fiction instead of fact, be the fiction ever so brilliant, our interest collapses like a pricked balloon. To hold our interest you must tell us something we believe to be true about the men who once walked the earth. It is the fact about the past that is poetic; just because it really happened, it gathers round it all the inscrutable mystery of life and death and time. Let the science and research of the historian find the fact, and let his imagination and art make clear its significance.

*The foregoing article will constitute part of an essay in a volume entitled "Clio, the Muse and Other Essays," shortly to be issued by Longmans, Green & Co. Its author, George Macaulay Trevelyan, son of the distinguished historian, George Otto Trevelyan, and grandnephew of Thomas Babington Macaulay, is himself one of the foremost historians of present-day England. Among his many books are "England in the Age of Wycliffe," "England under the Stuarts," "Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic," "Garibaldi and the Thousand," "Garibaldi and the Making of Italy," "The Life of John Bright," "Recreations of a Historian," and "Manin and the Venetian Republic."*

The first book to be published in Italy on the recent conciliation between the Church and State which contains all the documents leading up to the signature of the Lateran Treaty since 1926 has just been put on the index of prohibited books by a special decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office. The book, which is called "Give unto Cæsar, Mussolini's Religious Policy," was written by Signor Missiroli, a former Liberal and now a Fascist and one of the eminent journalists in the capital.

## American Art

ART IN AMERICA. By SUZANNE LA FOLLETTE. New York: Harper & Bros. 1930. \$5.

Reviewed by FRANK JEWETT MATHER

WRITTEN avowedly from the radical point of view, this book endeavors to be fair towards older and conservative art, and where it fails, as now and then it does, the cause is rather insufficient acquaintance than prejudice. One cannot imagine, for example, that the author would have dismissed Thomas Cole as an empty allegorist, if she had really looked at his finest landscapes, especially the smaller pieces. Similarly it does not evince close inspection of the work of either painter, when she rolls together Horatio Walker and H. O. Walker, the mural painter. However, such slips are inevitable in a book of this encyclopædic scope, and beyond noting them for correction, nothing is to be thought of them.

To correlate our art with our civilization has been the author's plan. It has been carried out successfully so far as the material permits. It has the disadvantage of making the most coherent part of the book that which deals with the least important subject-matter—our Colonial art. Here the correlation is complete, perhaps for the reason that there was plenty of life but very little art. Beyond that period the parallelism works only for architecture, and its succinct and vivid chapters on the whirlwind changes in architectural styles and no styles is the most valuable part of the book.

One must himself have made a comprehensive book of this sort in order to appreciate rightly the general spirit, accuracy, and judgment with which the task has been carried off. At times the interest flags. Indeed, being really an extended essay in criticism, the book would have been better for accepting the limitations of its *genre*, omitting mere enumerations and short notices.

The criticism reaches a high point of interpretation and good writing in the appreciations devoted to Eakins and Whistler, while it is a joy to find a writer of the younger generation conscious of the social and esthetic value of the art of William H. Hunt and John La Farge. There is necessarily some defective sympathy in treating the art of the late nineteenth century. There is, for example, a constant implication that an eternal duty is laid upon every painter to create "volumes" and repel all associations. But every generation must have its own esthetic pater, and "volumes" is that of our author's as "values" was that of my own. Without striking originality, this book will take its place creditably and usefully beside the excellent manuals of Miss Gardner and Miss Abbott.

As bookmaking it is interesting. The use of a new process of half-tone printing, called aquatone, allows the plates to be struck off on the uncoated paper which serves for the letter press. This makes a book delightfully light for its bulk, with the defect, at least in the copy before us, that the printing strikes through many pages. The cuts are of uncommonly good quality having much of the quality of collotypes.

General Walter Maxwell Scott, great-grandson of Sir Walter Scott, states that he has sold the MS. of Scott's unfinished novel, "The Siege of Malta," to the publishing firm of Sheed and Ward, London. The price at which the MS. changed hands is believed to be the highest paid for a Scott MS.

In January, 1832, Sir Walter Scott wrote in his famous "Journal": "Have written a great many pages of 'The Siege of Malta,' which I think will succeed." He died the following September at Abbotsford after writing 150 pages of the new novel, and the MS. has remained at Abbotsford ever since. General Walter Maxwell Scott, the author's descendant, is the present owner of Abbotsford. Sir Walter Scott worked on "The Siege of Malta" during the health voyage he took in a vessel lent by the Government a short time before his death.

Sir Rabindranath Tagore has written a film scenario based on his play "Tapati." The poet himself takes part in the film, which was made at his home in Bengal.



## Some Recent Fiction

### Counter-Revolution

THE WHITE COAT. By GENERAL P. N. KRASSNOFF. New York: Duffield & Co. 1929. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

GENERAL KRASSNOFF'S first novel, "From Double Eagle to Red Flag," was an astonishing story, written in exile by an ex-officer out of the still warm, vivid, and overflowing memories of an active Russian soldier's life. The sheer vitality of a talent, hitherto undeveloped, overrode technical difficulties, and spread out a Russian panorama which dwarfed the work of many more experienced but less temperamentally gifted craftsmen, and deserved to be mentioned in the same breath, at least, with Tolstoy's "War and Peace." It wasn't Tolstoy, by a long shot. All sorts of easy criticisms could be made of it; toward the end, when the émigré's imagination began to turn itself loose on the detested Bolsheviks, it grew rather maudlin. But it was magnificent, nevertheless.

His second effort, along the same line, in which he left the life he had actually lived through, and treated post-Revolutionary Russia, was much less successful. In "The White Coat," the redoubtable general leaves, for the most part, first-hand experience altogether, and embarks on an imagined counter-revolution which overthrows the Communists and restores a "Holy Russia." It is a strange product—interesting, for Krassnoff almost always contrives to be that, but ingenuous and rather wild, and as significant for its revelation of émigré psychology as for anything else.

The "Parents" are treated in the first part, in a picture of the melancholy end of an old officer who "accepted" Bolshevism; the "Children" in a second section, in particular through the lurid tale of a young girl, who, despairing of God because of what has happened to Russia, joined a nightmare cult and gave herself, body and soul, to Satan. And the latter half of the book is devoted to a sort of super-Ku Klux Klan, headed by a radiant knight in a white coat, which filters secretly into every cell of Communist life and finally overthrows the Bolsheviks.

The pathos of the émigré's morbid homesickness—often unconscious of itself—for vanished Russia, is felt throughout the book and especially in this latter part. When the supreme moment arrives, and the hero, so different from the Soviet leaders, so like a sort of glorified old-school cavalry-officer, with his white coat trimmed with sable, dusted with snow, so that "a rainbow-tinted halo seemed to surround him"—when the White Coat finally arrives, he comes as a "chief should appear. Not with the roar and hooting of a both capitalistic and democratic motor-car—the last production of the workers' industry—but with the merry tinkle of the troika, the image of peasant, agricultural Russia!" . . .

How many thousands of Russian émigrés, keeping alive, somehow, in obscure rooms and dismal barracks in the capitals of western Europe, try to forget reality in dreams of old Russia similar to this! Cling to the delusion that there is a road back to that old Russia; that if the Bolsheviks were somehow to be swept off the stage tomorrow, Russia would be, socially, economically, politically, what it was a generation ago—just as if there were a road back to our old South, or back to the France of Louis XIV, or back to one's youth! . . .

Many curious bits of political and social opinion are dropped through the story. Thus a Communist explains that

when the American Jew Charlie Chaplin grimaces before the public, when the beautiful, Ukrainian-born, Pola Negri makes sweet eyes at them, it is our propaganda that appears, unseen to them, behind their back. . . We have allowed them to stare at kings and emperors on the screen; we have made use of God Himself to whet their curiosity in "Ben Hur" and "The King of Kings." We have democratized and vulgarized everything in order to prove that there is nothing high or sacred in this world. . .

It is Communism, again, General Krassnoff apparently would have us think, and not the Paris "Kemgor," aided by the League of Nations, which is helping some of the Russian émigrés, to settle on the land in new countries. "All that is strong and healthy and truly Russian," he makes another Communist explain,

we'll manage to direct to Canada, Brazil, the

Argentine, the further the better. We'll know how to do it without being suspected of being in the play. They will be tied to the land with contracts, bound by work. No, there will be for them no going back to Russia. . . .

"The White Coat" is not to be taken very seriously, either as a novel or as politics, but the reader will be entertained most of time, and sometimes in ways not intended.

### Old British Columbia

RED WILLOWS. By CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER. New York: Coward-McCann. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by T. MORRIS LONGSTRETH

MISS SKINNER'S first novel, "The Search Relentless," disclosed to readers of Curwood and Connor that an adventure story of the Canadian west could be told with truth of observation and beauty of style. "Red Willows" does even more. Holding fast to the excellences of the first book, it interprets some neglected frontier history in terms of unalloyed but absorbing fiction. One learns, emotionally, what it was like to be alive in the days subsequent to the Cariboo strike in a small, gossip trading post. British Columbia is lucky to have had Miss Skinner for a pioneer child, for these days have cried out for an able story-teller. They have now found expression in a novel of uncommon quality.

Unlike western fiction, the interest of these pages depends little on plot. A sick young clergyman travels from England to Woman's Crossing, interior British Columbia, to die. He finds himself in a village of Scotch and Norwegians, English and Indians, Spaniards, and Chinese, gathered around the store stove of Finnan MacDuff. The climate is of some primitive heaven, but the daily life of Woman's Crossing is rather earthy and Hal Cressy is too engaged to die. It is the interplay of race and personality that engages him, as it does the reader, and when a murder occurs late in the book one feels that this violence is required less for the onlooker's excitement than to help Miss Skinner with her thesis.

This thesis is of course unstated, and it may be unfair to insist too much on it, but it does seem as if Miss Skinner had been brooding on the injustice of previous fiction in picturing a frontier managed and moulded exclusively by he-men. Where, she asks, are their partners in hardship? What about the brave and resourceful women? And she sets about revealing them in Woman's Crossing, grouped around and subtly led by Lucy Paley.

Mrs. Paley is a remarkable transference of breathing woman to the printed page and hers is undoubtedly one of the most finished portraits in Canadian fiction. She has charm and light-heartedness and nerve and nerves. She quivers with individuality, and, ironically, her best qualities nearly wreck the community. She has to put her ringed finger in every rough pie. Her maker has not spared her, baring her nature with a kind of loving venom until she attains a quite thrilling reality. She almost does not manage her high-spirited Spanish husband, but an opportune infant brings him to heel.

There are other women: the tired and unobtrusive sister of Great Finnan who could defy his egotism when necessary; Concha Santiago, wedded not too thoroughly to the unvoiced Eric Nord; Effie, the really touching prostitute; her sister Cherry, who aspires to Lady Cressy's son and of course gets him. All these characters have substance, and they are all better than their men, possibly because Miss Skinner can portray her sex better or possibly because she wants to.

The men are far from lifeless. Great Finnan, father of nine strapping half-breeds and dictator in Woman's Crossing to four races, is imperial—until his sister emits a tired word. Erik is symbolic of the hardy Norsemen's placid plough-riden life; he gets cuckolded. Bert marries the prostitute's sister as she designed. Mallow alone defies woman, and he, alas, is murdered. Indeed, the women decide that it would be better for justice never to know who killed him. So they don't tell.

Whether this matriarchal supremacy is quite accurate, historically, is open to some doubt, but it is a good corrective to the previous frontier romances of this region. And the scene is depicted in a style so vivid, by an ability to project character so powerful, as to place "Red Willows" without question among the very few Canadian novels of real worth.

Aldous Huxley, whose novel, "Point Counter Point," has been turned into a play, "This Way to Paradise," is publishing a new book in the spring, containing one long and several short stories.

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