

The Lookout

FIVE words that hushed a theater—and traveled from coast to coast: Perhaps you heard them spoken, over two decades ago, these words that gave the title to a play everybody discussed:

MARY: What are you?

MANSON: I am . . . (the great bell tolls the Sanctus) . . . I am the servant in this house. I have my work to do. Would you like to help me? And "The Servant in the House," with its ancient message of the healing power of love, turned the thoughts of everyone to the Golden Rule, and brought fame to its author, Charles Rann Kennedy. You may read it anew in the collected edition of his works, "Plays for Seven Players," presented in attractive typography by the University of Chicago Press, at \$5. Always a conservative, Mr. Kennedy remarks, with apparent satisfaction, that some of the issues raised in these plays are more acceptable now than when they were written, between 1906 and 1919. "The Winterfeast," "The Idol-Breaker," "The Rib of the Man," "The Army with Banners," "The Fool from the Hills," "The Terrible Meek" and "The Necessary Evil" are the plays in which Mr. Kennedy helped build the American theater of ideas.

"Morally careless rather than deliberately criminal," this is the verdict of the newest research on Gen. John C. Fremont, whose career belongs to the mysteries of human conduct. Cardinal Goodwin, professor of American history at Mills College, reaches this conclusion in a new study of documents and writings called "John Charles Fremont: an Explanation of his Career." His book is the analysis of a drifter—a man who loved to wander over vast, unexplored areas with congenial companions, rather than one who was a forceful, energetic, powerful leader. No man is wholly emancipated from his times; Fremont was, in the opinion of this writer, the victim of his age. To prove this theory Prof. Goodwin has avoided partisanship and drawn on much new material. (Stanford University Press, \$4.)

Once historians, like Fourth of July orators, made the eagle scream. Today historians make no compromise with the emotions—they tell what the record reveals.

THAT is why "The Growth of the American Republic," which Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager have just completed, is a book for the true patriot, who foregoes the cheering in order to get an accurate understanding of his nation's affairs. The United States cannot be considered in isolation, as the center of the universe. Throughout its history it has been influenced by the movements of peoples in other lands, and often its own policies have influenced nations far overseas. Yet Prof. Morison is able to call its growth "the most amazing drama in modern history." "The Growth of the American Republic" is a running account of our history, with terse estimates of its great leaders from Washington to Woodrow Wilson, taking into account internal and external policies, the influence of economic conditions on its expansion and the importance of social and racial forces in its development. The iconoclastic historian, who pulled down popular idols, passes; he is succeeded by the historian who weighs men and events without bias. This book of nearly 1,000 pages contains a detailed reading guide on every phase of American life. The Oxford University Press is publishing this book at \$6.

EVEN Italy, the land with "a burning desire of life," swings toward classical models in its newer literature. In America humanism; in Italy classicism point the way. There futurism ran its course before the war; materialism and disillusion followed; today comes a wish for order and harmony, and action. Dr. Domenico Vittorini, professor of Italian at the University of Pennsylvania, has described this cycle for the American reader in his new book, "The Modern Italian Novel." (University of Pennsylvania Press, \$3.) He traces the growth of the novel from the days of Manzoni and Giovanni Verga through to D'Annunzio, Pirandello, Croce, Papini, Borgese and Italo Svevo, and the younger intellectuals. This book is for the general reader who seeks wider literary horizons.

DOES smoking help or hinder your activities? Does it reduce your waist-line, or enlarge it? Does it make you a hail-fellow-well-met in your club, or a nuisance around the house? Perhaps these and similar questions have perplexed you as they did the students of Harvard University when Dr. Walter L. Mendenhall, professor of pharmacology in Boston University, first broached the subject. Dr. Mendenhall has literally packed a score of useful and sane observations on smoking into the little book he calls "Tobacco," discussing whether expectant mothers should smoke, whether tobacco stimulates or retards, and to what we really owe the evils and the enjoyment of the weed that has cast its spell over men from Sir Walter Raleigh to Sir James M. Barrie. This is one of the Harvard Health Talks, put into a booklet by the Harvard University Press at \$1.

As for the poets of yesterday—where are they, and why do they fade? There was Mrs. Lydia H. Sigourney, so popular ninety years ago that not to know her was to be ignorant of literature. True, Edgar A. Poe once damned her as "the American Hemans," but later sought her poetry for Graham's Magazine. Gordon S. Haight, who has found the key to the mystery of her extraordinary reputation, describes her as a singer of graveyard verse, dwelling on death and piety and the sublime when she was not describing the Deluge in these terms:

And slowly as its axle turn'd
The wat'ry planet moved and mourn'd.

Mr. Haight has revealed her story in "Mrs. Sigourney: the Sweet Singer of Hartford" (Yale University Press, \$3), and thus introduced us anew to a period in which Poe, Rufus Griswold, Horace Greeley, N. P. Willis, Longfellow were familiar on the American Parnassus. A letter from Poe, reproduced in facsimile, throws light on his editorial days.

L. O.

Books of Special Interest

A Study of Italian Art
SIENESE PAINTING OF THE TRECENTO. By CURT H. WEIGELT. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. (Paris: Pegasus Press.) 1930. \$42.

Reviewed by G. H. EDGELL
Harvard University

THE task of a reviewer is not always a grateful one. He is expected to criticize, and his criticism is too apt to be opprobrious. Indeed, he often picks up a book and runs through it with the chief idea of finding misstatements, or at least statements which he can dispute. In so doing he loses sight of his more important duty: that of stating the general character of his subject, with some estimate of its completeness, readability, and authority. Let us say at the outset, therefore, that Doctor Weigelt's book is an unusually satisfactory piece of work. It is well written and to the point. Useless descriptions of subjects, wordiness, "padding" of all sorts have been eliminated. Controversial points are discussed incisively and the material reduced by copious notes with specific references to articles. Above all, the author shows himself up to date in the literature of his subject. Whether or not the reader agrees with his conclusions on individual points, the author constantly proves that he is familiar with the opinions and arguments of other scholars, ancient or published within the year, and regardless of the language or type of publication in which they appeared. The book is a serious, readable synthesis by one of the very few great experts on the subject.

As one might expect in a book on the trecento, the lion's share of both text and illustrations go to an analysis of the styles of Duccio, Simone Martini, and the brothers Lorenzetti. It is fair to question, however, the size of this proportion. If we except Barna, whom the author tends to date unusually early, only two of the fifty pages of text are devoted to painters who worked subsequent to 1348. The same general proportion holds for the allotment of plates. Such an attitude can be defended. The greater Sieneese were much more important than the lesser, but there is a danger in overemphasizing them. Too long the general public has had the idea that there was no Sieneese painting after the Lorenzetti. Modern scholarship has busied itself with the resuscitation of forgotten minor artists and the disentanglement of minor personalities. It is a pity, therefore, in the most up-to-date book, to curtail so radically the discussion of them. Some that are beginning to be fairly well known and represented not only in public galleries but in private collections, are missing entirely. There is no mention, for example, of Ceccarelli, of Giacomo di Mino, of Gregorio di Cecco, of Niccolò di Segna, of Francesco di Vannuccio. The minor artists that are most emphasized are the Ducciesques. One resents a little the space devoted to the Master of the Città di Castello Madonna or him of the panel at Badia a Isola, when so imaginative an artist as Barna is given a cavalier treatment and none of his works outside the Collegiata at San Gimignano is reproduced.

It is fair, therefore, to say that the author stresses the early school. This is natural in view of the importance and the highly controversial character of the problems of Guido da Siena and of the Madonna Rucellai. Perhaps the most intriguing point to the expert is the author's alignment in the first of these problems. Since his book on Duccio, he has always been regarded as one of the staunchest and most scholarly adherents of the belief that Guido's famous Madonna in the Palazzo Pubblico was painted in 1221. The author now abandons this belief and dates the painting from the middle of the dugento. This was foreshadowed in an article in *Art Studies* in 1928. The later arguments, however, hardly seem as convincing as the earlier. The whole problem of the Sieneese dugento is shadowy and difficult. Many believe that a Sieneese school, in the sense of a school with Sieneese characteristics, did not exist before Duccio. The author's statement that already in the thirteenth century we can clearly recognize the characteristics which we call Sieneese, is certainly open to challenge.

It is interesting to note how the author stands in some of the most mooted questions with regard to Sieneese painting. The much discussed Madonna Rucellai he gives to Duccio, thereby reiterating his oft promulgated opinion. The weight of present authority is probably slightly against this attribution, but the reviewer confesses his agreement. It is not so easy to accept as by Duccio the fine Madonna from Santa

Cecilia in Crevole, now in the Opera del Duomo at Siena. Doctor Weigelt's list of Duccio is generous, and this is gratifying, as no other scholar has ever made so intensive a study of the subject. Some lists are obviously too restricted. The late Dr. de Nicola would have had us accept as authentic only three Madonnas in addition to the Majestas: the small Madonna of the Franciscans in the Siena Gallery, the large ruined polyptych in the same gallery, and the exquisite Madonna from Santa Maria dei Servi at Montepulciano, now in the Uffizi Gallery. Doctor Weigelt's list includes these and a judicious selection of others that most critics will accept.

The much discussed Madonna of the Gualino Collection at Turin he calls Florentine. This seems most probable. He makes a plausible group of paintings by the Master of the Madonna at Badia a Isola, and another and larger one of the works of the Master of the Madonna of Città di Castello. This helps to bring order out of chaos, though other critics will dispute in detail.

In some other questions the author has shown a more easy-going acceptance of previous opinion. For example, he attributes to Lippo Memmi the lateral wings of the Sant'Ansano Annunciation in the Uffizi, giving Simone the central panel. This is obvious, but is it not too obvious? It is extremely doubtful if a careful scrutiny of color, craftsmanship, and morphological detail would justify such a distinction. A docta ignorantia is ignominious but safer in this case. Another ancient attribution, oft challenged in modern times, is that of the Triptych in the left transept of the lower church of San Francesco at Assisi. For years this has been conventionally given to Pietro Lorenzetti, and many able critics still hold this opinion. Nevertheless, it has often been attacked, and it is at least noticeable that the author accepts it without question. Similarly, he accepts as by Pietro the Polyptych of the Beata Umiltà in the Uffizi. He is probably right, but it is strange that an author so familiar with the most up-to-date opinion did not at least mention Dewald's attack upon the attribution.

Doctor Weigelt devotes some time to a discussion of Berenson's restored personality, "Ugolino Lorenzetti." He also outlines Dewald's arguments in favor of the "Ovile Master." One could wish that he had come out squarely with an opinion as to whether the two were one and the same. It is an extremely difficult and highly controversial point. Perhaps the compiler of a synthesis is justified in dodging it. On the other hand, granted the restraint, it is not so easy to understand the author's acceptance of Rowley's revolutionary theories about Ambrogio Lorenzetti. It is quite possible that Doctor Weigelt came to these conclusions independently and before reading Rowley's article. More than that, it is quite possible that he and Rowley are correct, and that a follower and not Ambrogio did the frescoes of the Chapel of San Galgano at Monte Siepi, the exquisite Santa Petronilla altarpiece of Siena Gallery, and the Madonna of the Platt Collection at Englewood, New Jersey. If so, however, we should like to have a more careful analysis. At least the author might have pointed out the importance of the distinction. The public will be left with the impression that these important paintings are removed from Ambrogio's list because they are unworthy of the master. They may be removed because they are different, but it should be pointed out that such a modification of Ambrogio's list is somewhat like eliminating from Shakespeare's works "Hamlet," "Othello," and the "Merchant of Venice." Their segregation postulates an unknown artistic personality practically as important as Ambrogio's.

We seem to have abandoned ourselves to the reviewer's favorite sport of criticizing detail. However we may disagree in detail, we should not lose sight of the value of the book as a whole. It is a pleasure to read a work which is so convincing in authority, so free from the superfluous, so honest in attacking controversial points, and so well-bred in the avoidance of polemic.

The law library of Columbia University has acquired 4,250 volumes, comprising the collection of Karl Otto Johannes Theresius von Richthofen, a teacher of law in the University of Berlin, who died in 1888. Approximately 1,200 volumes in this collection are legal, and the rest are historical source material. They include rare works in old Frisian law and in early Dutch and German legal history, in which Von Richthofen was an authority.

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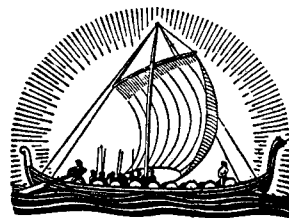
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Round about Parnassus

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THE most important book before us this week is naturally "Lyric America," edited by Alfred Kreymborg, author of "Our Singing Strength," to which it is a companion volume. Mr. Kreymborg has covered three hundred years in this anthology, and he has produced a solidly inclusive work, with a suggestion at the end of it for a selective library of American poetry of two hundred single volumes, as well as the proper indices. He dedicates "Lyric America" to his brother poets. He says in his preface that he has tried to make the present compilation complete in itself, and it may indeed be so considered. Stedman's former anthology ran from 1787 to 1900. It was time that a later collection be made. Edwin Markham's two huge volumes of "The Book of Poetry" includes the British poets as well as the American. Stedman, as Mr. Kreymborg notes, while he also did a British anthology and his American one was a quite separate affair, achieved notable breadth of interest in the latter. "With decided esthetic reservations," the present editor says,

I prefer Stedman's eclectic method, at his or even our young day in poetic history, to a method restricting editorial industry to a single critical standard. The single standard is the one to apply among lands old and deep-rooted in poetry: China, India, Greece, Italy, France, England. Time has matured among them and limned the living perspectives.

His preface is also a presentation of an attitude opposed to any "static finality." It is a sincere and modest preface.

Kreymborg is first of all a poet himself, caring more for an art that supplies its own inherent standards of criticism than for the vain striving that would attempt to set up final standards. What he says is essential common sense in dealing with such a protean art as that of poetry. And no one who has attempted to cover the work of three centuries in one art in one country alone can realize the extreme difficulties besetting compilation. In this volume he has also endeavored to correct omissions he has felt in his former work. Criticism of "Lyric America" therefore reduces itself to difference of opinion concerning specific selections, for as to the poets themselves it is difficult to see how a more inclusive representation could have been made in one volume.

Despite Anne Bradstreet and Freneau our Colonial and Revolutionary period was so barren of true poetry that Mr. Kreymborg's selections in Part One seem well chosen in their differences of subject presented to show the background of the time and to illustrate its interest and influence, rather than to claim any high poetic merit for this or that particular selection. At the end of it come Drake and Halleck, though Drake's birth actually post-dated Bryant's, who begins the second section. Yet this, too, seems a proper arrangement in perspective. Actually, and it is not Mr. Kreymborg's fault but the fault of the period, the first four lines of Halleck's tribute to Drake outweigh as poetry all else in this section.

We could have spared Bryant's "O Fairest of the Rural Maids," since in Section Two he is given half a dozen selections in all. We could also spare Maria Gowen Brooks's ecstasy of "high-wrought feeling," even though both attitudes toward and of maiden immaturity are characteristic of the dawn of the nineteenth century. But we thank the editor for recovering Percival's "The Coral Grove," and we are glad Old Grimes is here again, who "wore large buckles on his shoes, And changed them every day." We expected Pinkney's "A Health," of course, and thought Simms's "The Grape-Vine Swing" probable. Willis is next with a characteristic piece. Our first real regret is that more was not retrieved from Thomas Holley Chivers's "Eonchs of Ruby," something about those "Cydonian suckets." And Aldous Huxley would by no means approve the inclusion of Poe's "Ulalume," which is actually one of the great nonsense poems of the English language. Without defining the type of inspiration that produced

*That groan as they roll down Mount
Yaaneh*

In the realms of the boreal pole

we find such expressions as superb, though perhaps not quite as moving, as Lear's masterpiece which sighs softly,

Far and few, far and few

Are the lands where the Jumbies live.

Their heads are green and their hands

are blue

And they went to sea in a sieve,

a poem that has always engendered in us a positively divine wistfulness. We should have cut Poe to "To Helen," "Israfel,"

"The City in the Sea," and "The Conqueror Worm," all splendid things; and should have included "The Haunted Palace," which is in the same class. It is of historical interest, however, to find Sarah Helen Whitman's sonnet to Poe next in order. Ellen Hooper furnishes a tribute to Emerson after a series of selections at which we cannot cavil.

Mr. Kreymborg courageously confronts us with "The Day Is Done" and "The Arrow and the Song" from Longfellow, before giving us some of this poet's best sonnets and good shorter narratives. Yet, after all, such were the songs that sang themselves into every American home, and they represent the qualities that made Longfellow popular. If we cannot read "The Day Is Done" without hearing the accents of the Norsk Nightingale in convulsing Scandinavian parody, that's our affair. Of the "Hymn to the Night," also here, we have always held a far higher opinion. There is nothing wrong with such lines as

*From the cool cisterns of the midnight air
My spirit drank repose;
The fountain of perpetual peace flows there,
From those deep cisterns flows.*

And the final verse is genuinely beautiful.

Whittier was, of course, better; and thus he shows here; though why nothing of "Snowbound"? Holmes is well represented in his variety, and following him are Very, Cranch, Thoreau, and Channing,—and properly. We ourselves should not have given Lowell's "Commencement Ode" in full with nothing from the "Biglow Papers," in which he was a genuine pioneer. Melville was, of course, more of a poet in his prose than in his poetry, but needs must be represented. We are glad of Thomas William Parsons's one distinguished poem, and Whitman has his proper allotment to end Part Two.

Stephen Collins Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home" and James Ryder Randall's "My Maryland" are most significant of the South in Part Three. We would have done somewhat differently by Sidney Lanier, but he is properly appreciated. Irwin Russell, Alice and Phoebe Cary, Howells, Hay, Harte, and Miller, with Bierce and Maurice Thompson and Field all properly belong. But we have overrun our space and can only add that, before Markham ushers in our modern poets, the lighter and more humorous aspects of nineteenth century American poetry are not slighted by Mr. Kreymborg, and, of course, Emily Dickinson is given her proper span of pages. Beginning with Part Five, the poets will be familiar to most followers of our national verse from 1900 onward. As this area has already been a good deal anthologized, Mr. Kreymborg is to be congratulated on having strictly exercised a balanced personal judgment, even though we do not always agree, and he has done his work among the most modern with a decided idiosyncrasy of his own applied to an extremely comprehensive knowledge of what is being written.

The first definitive trade edition of the Collected Poems of Robert Frost has now been put on the market by Henry Holt in a volume that is an excellent example of book-making. There is no need to say anything further. Frost's position in American letters is already established in a high place.

We should touch on a few minor volumes before us. Constance Ferris's "Curtain Calls" (Harr Wagner: San Francisco) is presented in the manner of Masters's "Spoon River Anthology," and the portraits do not remain with us very long. Edith Anne Stewart Robertson's "He Is Become My Song" (Macmillan) is a reverent interpretation of the story of Christ in verse. It may be read for historical interest, but we should most strongly advise you rather to return to last year's fiercely inspired "Fire-head" (Brewer & Warren), by Lola Ridge, a work of genius on the chief New Testament characters. "Bloodroot and Other Poems," by Elizabeth S. Royce (The Morrill Press, Fulton, N. Y.), has some felicities among its brevities, but a good deal of it is very like the general run.

Thomas Norton Longman, for many years head of the publishing house of Longmans, Green & Co., died recently in Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, at the age of 81. He had retired some time ago.

He was the fifth Thomas Longman in succession since the firm's founder. Thomas Longman, in 1724 bought the business of William Taylor, the first publisher of "Robinson Crusoe."