

## Ancestor of Modern Poetry

BAUDELAIRE. By LEWIS PIAGET SHANKS. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1930. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JAMES ORRICK

WHEN Barbey d'Aureville (was it he?) declared that if one had read Baudelaire and had understood him, one had only two courses, *se brûler la cervelle ou se faire chrétien*, he must unconsciously have been thinking as much of Baudelaire's life as of his poetry. Mr. Shanks reminds us that "a poet's life is his works, far more than the adventures of his body"; and this is doubtless true enough of most major poets. But one cannot help feeling that of Baudelaire it was not true. He was one of those men whose real vocation is to be an artist in life. He was prevented from fulfilling his ideal—that of the dandy—by lack of will power, aggravated by that worst of all evils for a sensitive soul, lack of money. He took refuge, through drugs, in the *paradis artificiels*, and his life was a horrible failure. His poetry is a success.

Even his poetry, however, was unfortunate from a worldly point of view. The volume which Baudelaire had confidently expected to restore him in the eyes of the world—and how much that mattered to him is shown by his prayer, "O Lord my God! vouchsafe me the grace to produce a few fine verses which shall prove to me that I am not the worst of men, and that I am not inferior to those I despise"—"Les Fleurs du Mal" had the opposite effect. It was ill-received by his mother and attacked in the law courts of the Second Empire. Sainte-Beuve, who might have lent a helping hand and who liked, as he said, to *sonner le premier coup de cloche*, remained always strangely aloof.

"This 'misunderstanding' of his life's work was due to a great injustice," explains Mr. Shanks. "The court considered and judged his poems piecemeal, under a microscope. No one saw that the book was not an album of unrelated verse, but a series which taken as a whole can only inspire a horror of vice."

This is almost as bad as the original misunderstanding, which Mr. Shanks says Baudelaire "euphemistically termed his condemnation." But Baudelaire was never the man to indulge in euphemisms. He said himself that those who judged his poetry by its influence misunderstood it, whether they judged it good or bad. "Je sais que, dans les régions éthérées de la véritable poésie, le Mal n'est pas, non plus que le Bien." His purpose was to distil the essential poetry from apparent evil; and whether one chooses to place the emphasis on the beauty of the flower or the evil of the root, his volume could bear no other title than "Les Fleurs du Mal."



In viewing Baudelaire's life, perhaps the most fundamental thing one observes, as with so many Romantic Frenchmen, is his tendency to dramatize. Wounded to the quick as a child by the remarriage of his mother to whom he was passionately devoted, he never allowed himself to recover from the shock. "One doesn't marry again when one has a son like me," he said. And, in the words of Mr. Shanks, "as he had first exaggerated his rôle of Hamlet in his attitude toward his stepfather, so he travestied his rôle as a brother of Poe, a *poète maudit*. . . . One thinks of Poe's 'Berenice' in reading that note in his diary where he refers to his maniac ancestors, in solemn palace halls, victims of their terrible passions. He wished to see himself as a martyr to his exceptional nature and to his education, a monster, and yet a victim." He dramatized others equally with himself. Of Jeanne Duval he made a devil, and a Platonic divinity of Madame Sabatier. His preoccupation with his mother and his disillusionment when he realized her weakness made him long for a woman fitted "to warn, to comfort, and command"; and in his poem, "L'Idéal," he cites Lady Macbeth and Michelangelo's figure of Night. That the actual women in his life fell so far short of this ideal was one of the causes of his life's failure.

Baudelaire's emotional dramatization was largely unconscious, but in the intellectual sphere he was conscious of playing a part. "En parfait comédien," he says, he desired to "façonner son esprit à tous les sophismes comme à toutes les corruptions." This is the meaning of intellectual dandyism, that ideal which is one form of protest against the leveling of democracy. Its outward sign is a meticulous personal elegance; even in his most wretched circumstances, Baudelaire spent two hours dressing. Unlike that of Gérard de Nerval, however, who antici-

pated some of the vagaries of Oscar Wilde by leading a lobster down the Champs Elysée with a blue ribbon around its neck, Baudelaire's dandyism was eccentric only by the sobriety which distinguished him in an age of extravagance in dress. A lover of the beautiful, he thought, should show it by his dress and manners. The dandy's hero is the one who not only is different from the bourgeois, but shows it. In the end, when Baudelaire became devout, his dandyism survived, as Mr. Shanks thinks, in the desire to become a hero and saint.

Dandyism is a form of symbolism, and it is no accident that of the two contemporaries to whom Baudelaire felt himself most akin, Delacroix was always dressed elegantly in the English fashion and Wagner had a passion for satin dressing gowns. Baudelaire's artistic affinity with Wagner, particularly, is very striking. "Les parfums, les couleurs, et les sons se répondent," he says in "Correspondances," which is identical in principle with Wagner's theory of the music drama. He found in "Tannhäuser" the perfect symbol of the conflict he himself expressed in "Les Fleurs du Mal," and his late conversion finds a counterpart in "Parsifal." The descendant of Poe, of Albertus, of Choderlos de Laclos, and of the Latin poets of the Silver Age, Baudelaire is the ancestor of modern poetry as Wagner of modern music and Delacroix of modern painting.

How and why this is true it should be the object of a work on Baudelaire to show. The majority of English critics have merely placed him at the head and front of the "fleshy school," while Mr. Symons, unfortunately, touches nothing that he does not adorn. On this critical problem Mr. Shanks is not particularly illuminating. Neither, on the other hand, is his book primarily a biography. No scenes live again in his pages, and most of the characters remain names. The love affairs are especially unreal—the reader does not feel he knows Jeanne and Madame Sabatier, and the effect of the quotations from the poems is greatly weakened by translation. (Though faithful in sense and largely faithful in rhythm, Mr. Shanks's versions have little of the glow, the intensity, or the overtones of the original. Poetry, as has been so often said, is virtually untranslatable. In a new language a poem is either a different poem, or, more frequently, no poem at all.) Baudelaire's mother is a mere shadow, and the figure of General Aupick comes alive, paradoxically, only in the grave, and that in the very last sentence of the book. Baudelaire's father, however, is always real. But, most important of all, only on one or two occasions does one feel very near to Baudelaire himself.

In short, excellent and interesting as Mr. Shanks's book is, one is not quite sure what his object was in writing it. There is Baudelaire the man, Baudelaire the poet, Baudelaire the translator and critic, Baudelaire the ancestor of Verlaine and Rimbaud, of Mallarmé and Paul Valéry. With the Baudelaire who was all these and a man of genius, Mr. Shanks, in spite of many glimpses, never comes quite face to face. A work which accomplished this would fulfil a real function. For Baudelaire lives on today, not only in his own works, but in those of his successors.



## In the Name of Education\*

(Fable of the Man who while Climbing the Tree of Education became Lost in the Higher Branches and was Forced to Descend.)

ONCE upon a time there was a man who set out to understand Human Nature. So he went to an Institution where the Higher Learning was in Full Blast and told them of his intention.

"Just look at that!" they said proudly, handing him an Enormous Volume in which were enumerated all the Subjects of Study.

He had not gone far in his perusal when his eye fell on the word Anthropology.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Anthropology—that means Man. This is the Place for me." So he plunged in hopefully.

\* This Fable was among the papers left at his death by the late Charles A. Bennett.

He learned that among the Belindas of Uganda the warriors are forbidden to Disembowel their Enemies during the time of the Full Moon. When asked to explain this custom they invariably reply, *root ti ti root* ("it is not good form.") This, he was assured, threw a Flood of Light on Morality. The Obese Indians regard flatulence as a Mark of Inspiration. Those who exhibit unusual Capacity in this kind are highly esteemed among them and are set apart to become Medicine Men. This, he gathered, shed a positively Blinding Glare on the nature of Religion. Along with much other interesting information he learned that the So-Sos, a tribe of Australian Blackfellows, pierce the ears, nose, and lips with splinters of wood in order to accentuate their beauty; that the Thuds, cave-dwelling pygmies of Java, hold the bat to be sacred; while to the Klick-Klacks of Korea, on the other hand, it is evident that a god has chosen to incarnate himself in the Bung tree. At times of religious excitement they make themselves drunk on the sap of the sacred tree and commit Nameless Excesses.

From all this our student was asked to conclude that civilized man was little better than a Primitive Savage.

Continuing his research in the list of subjects, he came, not without fatigue, to Psychology.

"Aha!" he exclaimed. "Psychology—that means soul. Now we are getting to Business."

He began with White Rats. He subjected them to a number of tests, the conditions of which were quite remote from the ordinary experience of rats. When they became bored with the Absurd Performance and refused to play any longer they were "stimulated" to renewed activity. After an exhaustive series of experiments he emerged from the laboratory with the following results: first, rats can be taught to go to dinner when the dinner bell rings. Second, rats when stimulated by electricity show signs of displeasure. Third, rats when starved exhibit symptoms of hunger. All of which proved either that rats are very like human beings or that human beings are very like rats. His instructors preferred the Latter Version.

He was then promoted to Abnormal Psychology. He was introduced to the case histories of a large number of Hysterical Females. The data were on a little less unsavory than the interpretation given them by the Authorities. He went on to the comparatively clear and bracing airs of Insanity. He was given the privilege of visiting asylums where he could study the human mind in all stages of disintegration. The impression left upon him by this investigation was that we are all more or less "dissociated," and that every human being harbors in his Unconscious a demon crafty and obscene.

He sat down at his desk and added together what he had learned in his various courses. This is what it came to: Man is a rat-like savage suffering from demoniacal possession.

He put his head between his hands and groaned. "We are not amused," he said.

The next morning he strode into the Dean's office and confronted the Dean.

"I'm going back home," he said; "but before I go I want my money back. This place is a Fraud. I came here to learn about. . . ."

The Dean heard him through to the end. Then he pressed a button at the edge of his desk.

"Miss Barton," he said, "tell Professor Rinderpest that I can see him now."

As our student passed the open window of the office, he overheard the following fragment of conversation.

"Who was that angry looking youth that just went out?"

"Oh, just another freak. Said he had come here to study human nature, and, as he did not get what he wanted, demanded his money back. If that's what he wants to learn about he should sit at this desk of mine for a week."

Moral: Human nature begins at home.

CHARLES A. BENNETT.

Professor Alfred Zimmern, Deputy Director of the International Institute of Intellectual Coöperation, Paris, has accepted the invitation of the Oxford University Board of Electors to the Chair of International Relations at Oxford established by the gift of Mr. Montague Burton. Mr. Zimmern, who is the author of numerous books, was from 1919-21, Wilson Professor of International Politics, University College of Wales, and from 1922-23 Acting Professor of Political Science at Cornell University.



# Book Club Selections

**High Life Under King Edward**  
THE EDWARDIANS. By V. SACKVILLE-WEST. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY WALCOTT BOYNTON

MISS V. SACKVILLE-WEST, who is Mrs. Harold Nicolson, moves in the atmosphere of "the Bloomsbury group," of which the higher luminaries are Virginia Woolf, the Sitwells, Rebecca West, and Lytton Strachey. She springs from a noble stock, and has celebrated that dynasty in "Knole of the Sackvilles." She is an ardent traveller. This is her sixth book. Her writing is sophisticated, elaborate, and, alas, compound of several manners. Well, too well, she knows her Henry James, her Meredith, her Galsworthy, her Woolf. People who move deliberately in a certain atmosphere seldom breathe freely. I find this book labored and artificial, and frankly wonder at its choice by a book club as a tidbit for the American audience.

The hero is a young Duke, heir and slave to the ancient estate of Chevron. His mother is a still charming duchess with the morals, or amoral, of her class. She is bored at having a nearly grown son and a marriageable daughter. Sebastian is still at Oxford. On his majority he will take over the estate, and on his marriage the duchess will cease to be mistress of Chevron and decline to the status of dowager.

The scene opens on a house party at Chevron. Sebastian is at home on a holiday and in his usual offish mood towards his mother's guests. The men condescend to him and the women try to make a pet of him. He enjoys, as one of the guests says, the charm of patrician adolescence. He is a virgin, just about ready to succumb to the flesh.

Most of the duchess's guests are of her own circle, the world of fashion whose denizens are so mysteriously determined without regard to rank or wealth or breeding: "Strange hocus pocus, that juggles certain figures into prominence." Sebastian regards them restively. Another male, an outsider present in his role of lion, looks on them with more active curiosity. Anquetil is a Briton of humble birth who has acquired the manner and mood of a gentleman, and being now a famous explorer is admitted for a moment into the inner chambers of "society." He is a dark, interesting fellow with a scar, and the duchess not too subtly invites him to an intrigue with her own Grace. He recoils and escapes, but not before he has won the friendship of Sebastian and the love of his sister Viola.

Among the duchess's intimates and contemporaries is Sylvia, Lady Roehampton, a professional beauty now nearing the end of her career. Lord Roehampton is a dull and worthy fellow without suspicion of his wife's well-known infidelities. Now she is moved to make a lover of her friend's son, young Sebastian. He succumbs to her at once, and the intrigue is presently recognized and accepted by the whole fashionable world, including Sebastian's mother. The duchess thinks it quite a good arrangement for her son, since it keeps him out of vulgar messes, and postpones the inconvenient hour of marriage. Such liaisons are commonplace of the great world. The affair runs along comfortably and almost openly till somebody sends a parcel of letters from Sebastian to Sylvia to her husband. Whereupon that lord carries her away from Sebastian and from London and from England. Her goose is cooked.

Sebastian mourns her loss, rather absurdly, but is now moved towards a very silly vulgarian, Teresa, wife of a poor London physician. She is fascinated by his rank and surroundings, but when he tries to exercise his *droits de seigneur*, he discovers that middle-class Teresas have a different code from patrician Sylvias. So he determines to marry the girl his mother has destined for him, "the dullest, nicest, and plainest girl he could find." By now he has become pretty thoroughly shaped in the mould of his tradition. When Edward dies, Sebastian goes dutifully to the coronation of George, in all the panoply of his rank. The ceremony is described in detail. Coming away from Westminster in the family coronation coach, he sees through the window the lean, scarred face of the explorer Anquetil, whom he has not seen for six years.

Sebastian stops the coach, takes Anquetil aboard, and suddenly appeals to him to "pull him out of it," to rescue him from his fate as a great landowner and peer of the realm. Anquetil and Viola, he hears,

have been writing to each other all these years, and have now agreed to marry: but not now. Anquetil is leaving England at once for another three years' adventure. He challenges Sebastian to go with him:

"Come with me, and learn that life is a stone for the teeth to bite on. Then after three years you may perhaps come back with some sense of proportion. Or there may be a war, by then, which will kill you off. I've no doubt that you would behave with great gallantry, and I'll even admit that Tradition, by which you set such store, will serve you then in the stead of experience."

So our doughty adventurer and man of the people prosed along, quite like a book. We are to suppose that Sebastian (who is rather an empty fool but for his title and possessions) is moved by it to follow Anquetil somewhere, anywhere, and to learn something to his advantage from the experience. No, I must own there is little for me in Sebastian, he is a doll among a carefully manipulated company of dolls. If it is true, as the author's preliminary note alleges, that "no character in this book is wholly fictitious," it is also true that none of them achieves or approaches reality. The book may be read (once) for its satirical picture of aristocratic England in the easy days when good King Edward reigned.

—The Literary Guild.

## A Master Financier

MORGAN THE MAGNIFICENT. The Life of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1837-1913. By JOHN K. WINKLER. New York: Vanguard Press. 1930. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. WINKLER has written a popular biography, a book for the crowd—which is all that the subject at present permits. A scholarly and satisfying life of Morgan cannot be written until the family and the House of Morgan unlock their archives, and for evident reasons that will not be in the near future. At present the best that can be done is to gather from the newspapers, the financial magazines, the reminiscences of such men as Dr. Rainsford, who was Morgan's pastor and spiritual adviser, and the biographies of such financiers as James Stillman, such railway heads as E. H. Harriman, and such industrialists as Judge Elbert H. Gary, all the materials bearing upon Morgan's career, and to assemble a partial biography from them. That was done by Carl Hovey in his "Life Story of J. P. Morgan," the only previous history of the great banker's career. Mr. Winkler has had at his disposal much fuller data. He has made very full use, for example, of books by John Moody, Anna Robeson Burr, Ida Tarbell, George Harvey, and George Kennan that were not in print when his predecessor wrote. He has had the good sense, also, to avoid the excessively laudatory tone that detracts from the value of Mr. Hovey's biography. But he has produced nothing more than a spirited sketch, which will please the general reader without satisfying the student.

The outstanding merit of this volume—which is a decided improvement upon Mr. Winkler's popular and caustic life of Rockefeller—is its readability; its outstanding defect is its lack of expertness. If a masterly life of Morgan is ever written, it will be by a man who combines the roles of economist and historian, and Mr. Winkler understands neither too well. But he does understand how to give a quick, vivid impression of a social scene, how to tell a story with vigor and interest, and how to render a portrait of his hero. In this book he had a fascinating tale, and there is not a dull page in its narration. No one should go to him for an account of the nation's financial situation in 1895, when Cleveland was waging his courageous struggle to maintain the gold standard; and yet even this page in our history is extremely well told. The reader will catch the drama of the situation—Cleveland battling with the silverites in Congress, Pulitzer mercilessly assailing Cleveland and Secretary Carlisle, Morgan and August Belmont waiting with their syndicate proposal for the purchase of gold. What the reader will not get is meticulous accuracy of detail. Mr. Winkler, for example, recalls the well known fact that Cleveland did not know until February 7, 1895, when Morgan called his attention to the matter, that among the general powers of the Secretary of the Treasury was

the authority to purchase coin with the bonds and notes of the United States. Mr. Winkler puts some words of wonderment and relief into Cleveland's mouth. The President, he writes, assented. "The Government had surrendered to that inevitable power known as Morgan." But there was no such surrender. When Morgan urged the President to buy \$100,000,000 in gold under the law, Cleveland rejected the advice.

In his intentness upon telling a good story, Mr. Winkler singles out the high spots. These are fairly obvious: Morgan's work in bringing the battling Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads to terms; his work in railway reorganization after the panic of 1893; his assistance to Cleveland in 1895; his share in the Hill-Harriman battle; the organization of the United States Steel Corporation, our first billion-dollar company; the Northern Securities merger, and the ensuing contest with President Roosevelt; and his work of financial salvation again in the dark days of 1907. The advantage of dealing with these salient episodes, and leaving out routine chapters on banking and corporation organization is that the author can keep his tale always at the highest interest. The disadvantage is that he retells many stories that are now rather old, and does so without adding anything that is new. His Northern Securities chapter, for example, shows no such effort to accumulate fresh data as was revealed by Mark Sullivan's chapter on the same subject in "Our Times." Moreover, by thus limiting his story Mr. Winkler makes his book a slender volume—there are 312 pages—and omits much on which we really need new light. For example, we get almost nothing on many of the special railway reorganizations, like the Chesapeake and Ohio; almost nothing on the International Mercantile Marine fiasco; almost nothing on the relations with Morgan, Harjes in Paris and Morgan, Grenfell in London, and just what they meant.

—Business Book Club.

## Swan Song

THE DANCE OF YOUTH. By HERMANN SUDERMANN. New York: Horace Liveright. 1930. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LEONARD EHRLICH

IF "The Dance of Youth" were the effort of an obscure writer one would fling it summarily to the limbo of pot-boilers. But this is Hermann Sudermann's last work before his death; this is a pitiful commentary on the decline of a fine creative power. For the man who wrote "Magda," "The Excursion to Tilsit," and "The Wife of Steffen Tremholt," it is an incredible swan song—gross, stupid, and altogether lifeless.

The book's chief character is a young German Fräulein, Stumpy Ludicke, and her amorous antics between her sixteenth and seventeenth birthdays comprise its substance. It plods forward in the best, or more properly, the worst cinema fashion, with wooden types posturing against lush trappings; with Stumpy becoming a woman of the world, and liking it. There is Dr. Shadow, dentist for idle rich women, a Lothario with "melancholy eyes that looked forward languishingly from deep sockets lit up by strange lights and threateningly crowned by thick-semi-circular eye brows . . . what eyes! what extraordinary eyes!" There is Herbert, the gigolo, with a sneer and a heart of gold; Gudrun, the sophisticated modern girl who knew what she wanted from life and went for it, mouthing smart aphorisms on her far from lonely way; and old-fashioned mamma and papa, hopelessly behind in knowledge of the "new" love-lore; and the middle-aged suitor, hide-bound and provincial, with more money than sex-appeal; and Stumpy's one true mate, the handsome Fritz, who wore outrageous socks, had romantic notions, and a self-control that was Stumpy's despair. There is a seduction, moonlit dancing halls, "arty" gatherings, night clubs, all making a veritable handbook on modern love for young girls. Here are a few of the profundities:

A kiss is the beginning of all the evil. For once a girl has been given a kiss, she feels more is wanted of her.

It seems to me that a kiss is something sacred and one has no right to bring contumely upon it even in fun.

Seduction, indeed! Just as if every woman did not want to be seduced. . . . Every girl knows how to fan the flames, though we all of us pretend to be extinguishing them.

And the book is filled with such brilliant dialogue as this: "I bet you anything you like, Kiddoo, that you'll make your way in the world. The way you throw a leg and waggle your esteemed behind . . ." Neither on land nor sea was ever such talk. The translation, rendered by the hitherto workmanlike Eden and Cedar Paul, is uniformly slovenly and often ludicrous, in entire keeping with the book's low tone.

"The Dance of Youth" is a sorry performance in every way. One leaves it with regret that such a work has been chosen by a book club for widespread distribution, and the wish that Herman Sudermann had been content to pass the long wane of his life and power in a dignified silence.

—Book League of America.

## The Incomparable Holmes

THE COMPLETE SHERLOCK HOLMES. By A. CONAN DOYLE. Memorial Edition. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1930.

To review the Sherlock Holmes tales at this late date would be a mere work of supererogation. Even to laud their compelling interest in this particular journal where Christopher Morley's appreciation that serves as introduction to the Memorial Edition has so recently appeared in the columns of his *Bowling Green* would seem to be superfluous. Suffice it to say that between the covers of two neatly bound volumes appear all the stories in which Conan Doyle's incomparable detective plays a role. Surely here is a royal feast to set before the lover of detective literature.

—The Book-of-the-Month Club.

## Prairie Life

BLACK SOIL. By JOSEPHINE DONOVAN. Boston: The Stratford Co. 1930. \$2.50. Reviewed by ROBERT B. MACDOUGALL

THE desolate life of the pioneer is again laid before us in the hope that our sympathies will be stirred and our historical sense sharpened. This time, a prairie section of northwestern Iowa is the scene, a section where in the 'sixties the railroad had not yet substantially penetrated, where a neighbor several miles away was a neighbor indeed, and where German, Dutch, and Irish settlers had the country largely to themselves. The Yankee was a rare bird, and the Indian, though he appeared erratically here and there, was more than anything else a bogey-man to frighten the children. Desperately earnest farming filled the days of these settlers, and the fight to harvest their crops in the face of fire, drought, and insect plagues was only occasionally won.

To this life came Tim and Nell Connor, enthusiastic from the East, where, in Northampton, Massachusetts, they had been well fed and safe, though restless enough to start West. They brought to Iowa memories of New England greenness, of economic placidity, and of such odd trifles as the time when Nell "went up to Cattle Show with my uncle, and we met the Panifers. They took us to Dickinson's with them for tea. Emily was serving it on the veranda of their large house. She is a poet. . . ." But in Iowa there was little poetry that even the most resolutely Celtic household could discover; there was merely the tiring lack of trees and hills. In all this, the Connor children grew up, and a stray young orphan girl was adopted. The struggle for existence was never quite in vain, though the philosophic patience of Tim and Nell was frayed almost beyond recognition as hardships and calamities accumulated. But somehow their tempers kept fundamentally serene, and at the close of the novel they have, beyond doubt, come out the victors over their fates.

The story is one of atmosphere, essentially. It will remind many readers of "My Antonia," and as a picture of foreign-born pioneers it is not wholly overshadowed by Miss Cather's novel. Though it is never written with quite the skill that was necessary if we were to feel exactly as Miss Donovan wished us to, "Black Soil" is usually pointed, so to speak, in the right direction. Miss Donovan is straightforward and honest; it is too bad that she lacks so many of the qualities that might have given her novel real effectiveness.

—Catholic Book Club.