

overstep the normalities and the proprieties of fatherhood. This has no effect upon the outcome; the outcome is already behind us; Elizabeth is married. All that happens is that Mr. Besier and Edward Barrett, in sinister complicity, succeed in making both Elizabeth and the reader very uncomfortable. It is curious to observe how far sometimes, in popular interest, the obvious exceeds the remotely and insalubriously lawless. In this book, the prescribed, the inescapable, situation, the father's consternation at Elizabeth's elopement, is far more moving than the anomaly which Mr. Besier has gone so far, and trodden in such miry ways, to seek.

The best of the play is not the delineation of the high protagonists. Mr. Besier is not at home with greatness. Robert Browning would never have courted Mr. Besier's Elizabeth, and Elizabeth would never have left even 50 Wimpole Street in company with Mr. Besier's Robert Browning. Browning furnishes the livelier stage material; he dominates and insists, proving conclusively that it is a great deal easier to be dominating and insistent than to be Browningsque. Mr. Besier's best work is done on a lower plane where he moves with the cheerfulness and freedom of a man in his own yard; he succeeds with Henrietta, the romping rebel, and her agreeably boobyish lover, Captain Surtees Cook. The best act in a rambling and ambling drama is the fourth, where Barrett's ruthlessness with Henrietta is skillfully employed to goad the reluctant and shrinking Elizabeth into decision. The other Barretts have a lumbering sprightliness and timid swagger which is probable enough, but not markedly sympathetic.

The play has literary associations and a theatricality which experiment in two capitals has apparently verified. On no other grounds is it entitled to hope for a lasting or significant place in English literature.

Not Sad Enough

WOMEN ARE NECESSARY. By JOHN HELD, JR. New York: Vanguard Press. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by BARRY BENEFIELD

A CROWN must be set, at any rate, upon the courage of John Held, Jr. He is a professional funny man who, as a pictorial artist, has deliberately, diligently, and profitably mocked at all the old characters, situations, and themes supposed, these days, to belong exclusively to sentimental melodrama. Now, as a writing man, in this his first novel, he tells the story of Edna, the young, innocent, good-natured, small-town girl who is wronged by a prowling, heartless man of the cities and towns; and then she goes down and down, dying in physical and moral degradation on a bed of shame on the last page, thinking brokenly of her childhood, her baby, stray events of her womanhood.

But no, you say, surely Mr. Held is not serious about such a story; he's just making fun. Yes, he is indeed serious. You will find no funning in "Women Are Necessary."

And well he might be serious. The story of the Ednas of the world is a great theme for a supreme master. It is being retold constantly by shoddy fakers who are ashamed of it and who put it under heavy disguise to make it seem something other than it is. We salute again Mr. Held's courage and sincerity; he gives Edna's story straight. He not only gives it straight and neat, he blazes with righteous indignation about it.

The trouble with Edna's story as told by Mr. Held is that it isn't effective enough. He didn't do what he wanted to do. We don't believe in his Edna or any of the persons, almost all men, with whom she is concerned. He should make us believe in them so thoroughly that we should want to weep and fight about them.

This day of ours being what it is, and we being what we are, an author who tries to make us believe in Edna and her group, and feel adequately about them, is undertaking a heroically hard job. But if he elects to work on the job, he is properly responsible for what he does. Mr. Held tried—Mr. Held failed. His story of Edna is simply not good enough. It is not sad enough.

Seldom has a professional funny man given such an opening as has Mr. Held in this novel for facetious, smart-alecky jibes aimed at him—him of all people!—in the role of sob sister. He is not a sob sister. He is a recklessly brave writing man who attempted a story far beyond his present powers.

A Puritan History of Art

MEN OF ART. By THOMAS CRAVEN. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by LLOYD GOODRICH

THAT the Book-of-the-Month Club should have chosen an art book this time is unusual; but this is an unusual art book. Most volumes on art nowadays are either highly technical or sentimentally popularized. Mr. Craven has brought back the human note, combined with a vigorous and masculine philosophy. His book is the most readable "outline" since Elie Faure's great work; but unlike the latter, it is restricted to painting in the Western world from Giotto to the present, as exemplified in its leading figures, and the emphasis is as much on the lives and backgrounds of the artists as on criticism.

Mr. Craven is far from the detached, Olympian type of critic. He is a vehemently personal writer with strong convictions. His creed is a violent reaction against certain trends of modern criticism best represented by Roger Fry: the conception of art as a purely formal, abstract affair, independent of its epoch or environment or of any "literary" content. To Mr. Craven all this suggests the ivory tower. Art must bear a vital relation to life or he will have



Hogarth's portrait of Lord Lovat, painted the day before that famous rascal's death, and showing him counting off on his fingers the days of life that remain to him. From "Men of Art."

none of it. To him it is not something esoteric but a universal language expressing the most broadly human ideas and feelings. His tastes are realistic; subject matter is of fundamental importance to him, and he is absolutely opposed to abstractionism. The masculine virtues interest him more than the feminine. His admiration goes out chiefly to the great artists of the Renaissance.

All of this represents a healthy change from the preciousness of much contemporary esthetics. Mr. Craven says many things that need saying today. With the breakdown of old standards there has been a tendency to lose sight of the great figures and the great qualities of the past, and to exalt minor ingenuities and preciosities. Mr. Craven does well to recall the supreme creators. The largest and finest part of his book is devoted to the artists of the Renaissance, and in his chapters on Giotto, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Rubens, Rembrandt, he is at his best, writing with enthusiasm, imagination, a generous sweep, and true passion. It is good to read such criticism, in which the basic human values of great art are once more affirmed with power and intelligence. These pages prove that in spite of all that has been written on these themes, they have not lost their capacity to inspire fresh thoughts and emotions.

Mixed with the author's appreciation is a ballast of hard, shrewd commonsense. He is never carried away by admiration into false emotion. The old masters to him are human beings, not angels, and his treatment of their personal side is robustly realistic, with a lack of idealization which emphasizes their humanity without detracting from their greatness. A keen sense of character makes his portraits of them living, and rich in material which contributes to the understanding of their art.

Mr. Craven's enthusiasms are balanced by equally strong dislikes. For every great man whom he praises there are hosts of others with whom he has no patience. His critical viewpoint, honest and vigorous as it is, has its limitations. Its chief premise, that the artist should be inspired directly by life, not by the art of others or of the past, is healthy but not very profound. Distinctions between "art" and "life" are at best crude and superficial. Genius operates in various ways, and gives its vitality to anything it touches. Mr. Craven places an unwarranted value on the type of artist who comments directly on his age and environment, and he rates satirists like Goya, Hogarth, and Daumier on a level with far more universal figures. On the other hand, he has not much capacity to appreciate a work of art, aside from its background, as a primarily esthetic creation. Formal qualities mean comparatively little to him; he does not see that they are of more enduring value than any amount of comment on life. He makes the common mistake of assuming that concern with form means a divorce from reality. He is suspicious of "beauty," and in a sense rightly, for the poor word has been so manhandled by academic critics that it suggests only mauve Whistlerian sentiments; nevertheless it does represent an essential and ultimate value, to which he is more or less unreceptive.

He appears similarly incapable of appreciating art that is calm, happy, and untroubled by conscious thought or conflict. That painting should be merely a praise of life, a re-creation of the sensuous beauty of the world, he seems unable to understand. Sensuousness goes against his grain; at bottom he is a Puritan critic, to whom great art must always be austere, difficult, tragic. Hence among the Italians he is partial to the Florentines at the expense of the Venetians, and omits Raphael, to whom he refers as a pretty, popular painter—mistaking his repose for weakness and missing his serene power.

This strain of Puritanism shows also in a curious distrust of any element of sex, which appears with a frequency that suggests obsession and distinctly warps his artistic opinions. Venice to him is "the courtesan city," whose most typical artist is Titian, a "sensualist" and a creator of "aphrodisiacs." Into Titian's nudes he reads implications strange to a healthy-minded person, even quoting with approval Mark Twain's provincial ravings at "Titian's beast," a piece of insane prudery which one can forgive in a professional backwoods humorist but not in an art critic. This prejudice leads him to a strange misjudgment of the art of the great Venetian, who, he says, could neither draw nor compose—this, about one of the few supreme masters of formal design!

But it is when he comes to French art that Mr. Craven loses his balance most disastrously. There is no doubt that the present tendency is to overrate the French, who in spite of their domination of European taste since the end of the Renaissance, have produced rather a succession of lesser figures than any artist of the first rank; but while this fact would bear emphasizing, it could be done without going to the ridiculous extreme of wholesale condemnation. Mr. Craven's Francophobia sounds almost pathological; nothing that the unfortunate race can do pleases him. His estimates of French artists, with the exception of Daumier, are grotesquely unfair, and his account of them is one long polemic against France and everything French. Paris is as much a den of iniquity to him as to any Methodist minister.

He shows an even more pronounced complex against modern art. Sideswipes at it keep intruding into his discussions of the older masters, considerably marring the dignity of the theme; and as he gets nearer to the present day his voice rises. Finally he sets up a straw man, the Modernist. This despicable creature is anti-social, afraid of "life," morbidly introspective; his sexual life does not bear looking into; he is lazy; he has no "mind"; he paints nothing but bloodless abstractions; he spends his time brooding in his studio (there is something inexplicably offensive to Mr. Craven in the word "studio"). To anyone familiar with contemporary artists and their work, this is laughable. If, as the author himself says, "our chief concern is with the art of our own time, whether we like it or not," it would seem worth while to make a serious attempt to understand it.

Mr. Craven, as can be seen, is far from the perfect critic. He lacks the essential qualities of balance and the desire to understand even those artists he does not like. Impersonal truth interests him less than the expression of his own prejudices. He has a habit of making facts agree with his opinions, instead of the reverse. It is remarkable how things which are virtues in the artists he likes become vices in those he dislikes: running a picture factory, for ex-

ample, is all right for Rubens but not for Raphael; and the Florentine propensity for murder is a playful symptom of vitality, whereas the comparatively harmless habit of adultery in the Venetians is shocking. It is evident that he has not yet thoroughly thought out the reasons for his prejudices; and his worst critical errors are due to his too exclusive reliance on personal emotion. The large amount of rather pointless denunciation in the book is a blemish; some of this Menckenesque invective is keen and tonic, but the great bulk of it is distinctly tiresome.

One regrets these faults all the more because Mr. Craven's general viewpoint is so sound and so much needed in contemporary criticism. His excesses go far towards weakening a fundamentally strong position. But it is perhaps not fair to treat the book as a piece of impartial criticism. In its own way it is a work of art, marked by some of the distortion that Mr. Craven finds in his contemporaries in the field of painting. As such it is always lively and stimulating, and frequently stirring. We have enough safe, omniscient criticism; a blast like this is needed now and then to clear the air. With this book Mr. Craven steps out as one of our most colorful writers on art. With all his faults he has the root of the matter in him; let us hope that in time he will gain more tolerance, if not appreciation, of types of art alien to his temperament.

The Story of *The Reviewer*

INNOCENCE ABROAD. By EMILY CLARK. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HERSCHEL BRICKELL

EXACTLY a decade has passed since Emily Clark and Hunter Staggs of Richmond, saddened at the death of the only literary page in the city's newspapers, picked up from some one the notion of starting a "little magazine." The suggestion evolved into *The Reviewer*, which every one interested in American literature will recall without effort, although its last Virginia number appeared in 1924, and the last number of the transplanted magazine a year later. "Innocence Abroad" is, in essence, the story of *The Reviewer*, and it is as gay and clever and slyly malicious and entertaining a volume as any one might wish to read, in addition to being a real contribution to the subject of the revival of good writing in the South.

After an introduction devoted to a sketch of the magazine's career, brief, checkered, but consistently honorable, Miss Clark, who proved her worth as an essayist with "Stuffed Peacocks," carries on the charming story by means of a series of sketches of some of the outstanding persons who lent aid of one sort or another to her venture. Most of the literary figures thus discussed helped with personal counsel, contributions, and missionary work; one of them, James Branch Cabell, once went so far as to edit the magazine for three months. The younger authors were glad to write for *The Reviewer* in order to be associated with the bigwigs. Burton Rascoe once said that Miss Clark's ability to persuade all kinds of people to write for the magazine gratis savored of the miraculous.

Mr. Cabell opens the ball, with Ellen Glasgow coming next—and those readers who do not realize how long ago Miss Glasgow began to write good and bold and significant novels will find an admirable brief evaluation of her work in the chapter devoted to her—and followed by Amelie Rives (Princess Troubetzkoy), Joseph Hergesheimer, H. L. Mencken, Carl Van Vechten, and Ernest Boyd. Then comes a lovely tribute to Elinor Wylie, whom Miss Clark did not meet until 1924, but whom she came to know well—there is no finer bit in the book than the description of the dinner the two had in a Half Moon Street hotel, Half Moon Street possessing its own quality—followed by chapters on three of the magazine's contributors who were later to win fame, Frances Newman, Julia Peterkin, and DuBose Heyward. It was Mr. Mencken who wrote Miss Clark about Miss Newman and Mrs. Peterkin, and both really began their literary careers in *The Reviewer's* pages. Mr. Heyward was already known as a poet before he contributed prose to the magazine. The book closes with a combined chapter on Paul Green and Gerald Johnson, both contributors, who were the moving spirits in the eventual transfer of the magazine to North Carolina, where it lasted only one year. An effort was made to pay for contributions, which was probably a fatal mistake, since it so completely violated tradition. There are photographs of all these notables, well reproduced.

Many another famous name enters Miss Clark's pages, for she met the great and near-great on her trips to New York to round up material, and also in Richmond; Sinclair Lewis promised to write something for *The Reviewer* but never did, and as might be expected, there were other failures, but the average was strikingly high. Not content with making established authors write pieces for her, Miss Clark infected many with her enthusiasm, and sent them out as missionaries to gather in further contributions. Robert Nathan sent her one of his most delightfully characteristic poems, which Miss Clark has graciously reprinted in her book, since it is not hard to come by—I wonder what a complete file of *The Reviewer* might bring about now?—Ronald Firbank wrote for the magazine, and John Galsworthy, Arthur Machen and Edwin Muir, Gertrude Stein and Aleister Crowley, Achmed Abdullah—"Captain Abdullah's single adventure in fame without specie" comments Miss Clark—and Margery Latimer. . . .

Miss Clark is too busily engaged in telling her high-spirited story to try to underline the accomplishments of *The Reviewer*, but those of us who recall the state of letters in the South at the time of the appearance of Mr. Mencken's famous diatribe, "The Sahara of the Bozart," will be inclined to give *The Reviewer* no small share of the credit for the existing condition of affairs, when, as DuBose Heyward says, "It is almost as chic in literature to be a Southerner as to be a Negro." Jest aside, if Miss Clark's magazine had done no more than nourish the budding talent of Julia Peterkin, it would have justified its existence, but it actually did a great deal more. It was an intelligently conducted experiment from the first, unbusinesslike, assuredly, but with high standards. And it deserved just the sort of history that has been written in "Innocence Abroad," a book that no one seriously interested in the recent history of our literature can neglect, and a book that no one who is capable of enjoying really first-rate talk about writers and their work should overlook. I do not see how Miss Clark could have done her job more engagingly; it is not difficult to understand how she accomplished what she did with *The Reviewer* after a careful reading of her book.

Gypsy Love

FLAMENCO. By LADY ELEANOR SMITH. The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CLINTON SIMPSON

IN this rather out-of-the-ordinary romance, the author of "Red Wagon" tells the story of a gypsy girl's life, her love for two Englishmen, and her relations with an English family. The story is laid in the England of a hundred years ago, and is always very picturesque. The costumed characters, the strangeness of the house on the moors, the weird witch-like and elf-like minor characters in the background give it a romantic atmosphere. The touch is light, and the exaggerated romanticism often technically excellent.

As a child, the gypsy girl, Camila, is sold to a dissolute Englishman living with his family in a secluded spot on the moors, and she grows up with his children. She learns English ways, but her gypsy blood breaks out at times. When she is old enough, she marries one of the Englishman's sons, but soon finds that she really loves the other son, who is "like a gypsy."

Instead of going to live with Harry, Camila acts according to English conventions—as she has learned them—and remains with her husband. She considers it her duty to stay with him so long as he loves her, though she despises him. Gradually her contempt destroys his love, he takes up with another woman, and asks Camila to leave him. Then at last she is free to live with her lover.

The first chapters are very good. They describe the flight of a gypsy family—Camila's family—through Spain and France, and then across the Channel. The bright colors of the countryside, the desperation the family feels, the cruelty of other gypsies toward the outcasts are presented with economy and vigor.

The book is long, and seems at times a trifle thin. Frequently the author uses the conventional symbol and the conventional phrase, rather than the fresh, unhackneyed equivalent. The characters are not always quite alive, and not all the characters are alive. The book has color, a great deal of color, cleverly applied, and always—as we have said—picturesqueness. It is the Book League of America selection for April.

Out of Scotland

WHITEGATES. By ORGILL MACKENZIE. New York: Coward-McCann. 1931. \$2.50.

Review by FRED T. MARSH

THIS first volume of a Scottish poet and story writer indubitably contains literature. Half in verse, half in short stories, it reveals a small world all its own for us to peer into. There are real people here, a bit uncannily real; there are mystery and fear and a touch of madness; there are beauty and many simple things. Orgill Mackenzie has brought them to us, aided by echoes from kindred spirits out of the past—from Emily Brontë to Katherine Mansfield—in a voice which remains independently her own.

Both poems and stories fuse admirably to form a whole. And if the former must yield to the latter in point of subtlety and sureness, the verse, alone, is of high quality and rich in promise. As arranged here the poems deepen in tone from the natural simplicity of

A root in the right soil,
Sun, rain, and a man's toil.
That, as a wise man knows,
Is all there is to a rose

to the Northland mysticism of "End of Days," "Haunted," and "Fear."

These verses, disturbing and melancholy, catching you unaware with a sudden swift thought or image, serve as an exquisite introduction to a group of remarkable short stories which exhibit the same qualities. In the sense that the words are selected with a care in which the factors of sound and rhythm and connotation as well as of economy and precision are all weighed, this is a highly poetic prose. It is intricately woven, subtle in harmony, and says with both freshness and exactness what it wishes to say. It fairly sings but the song is only the background to the tale. The tale remains the thing. Only it is carried above the ruck on the magic carpet of good prose woven out of beautifully selected words.

"Aunt Jessica" is a story of two little girls. Mary is smart and pretty and shows off. Janet is slow and sensitive and conceals her emotions behind a face which looks like a round solemn little mask. They leave their beautiful, stylish mother to spend a few months with fat, homely Aunt Jessica and awesome Grandfather. Under Aunt Jessica's comforting wing little Janet blossoms out. But when she returns home the child realizes that it is not going to be so easy to hold on to her new self. But she makes a brave start. That is all. Yet, this little story, not at all unusual in theme, seems to me to be a great short story. "Something Different" is another story in which one sees people and things through the eyes of a child. These two are, perhaps, my favorites, unless, indeed, the first little tale of the few brief days of a baby chick malformed at birth, a piece containing extraordinary, vivid descriptions of simple objects, be not the gem of the collection. The title story in its starkness, its north country dourness, with its rude folk and harsh manners, suggests "Wuthering Heights" and again "Lorna Doone," but in spirit it is really of neither. One story, "Why Not?" which envisions the end of the world, leaps over all bounds and fails. It seems compounded half of madness. Read with the others, however, it helps to create the unusual, at times morbid atmosphere of the whole volume.

The future work of an artist like Miss Mackenzie will be, it is safe to predict, of high quality.

The Antwerp Municipal Council has decided to restore the house and studio once occupied by Rubens, and to convert them into a museum.

The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.....Editor
AMY LOVEMAN.....Managing Editor
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.....Contributing Editor
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.....Contributing Editor
NOBLE A. CATHCART.....Publisher

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