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of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Words as Nuisances

WHEN is a word a nuisance? The *Manchester Guardian* has been trying to find out by offering a prize for the best list of ten words that can be so regarded, and the results of the competition, to judge from the editorial pronouncement of the paper upon it, are interesting. Certain of the words which seem to have aroused the most violent objections on the part of British purists are already in the index expurgatorious of any journals pretending to nicety of expression, while others it would be hard to get any jury of writers to agree upon. Some of them are newly created, like "hiker," which seems to have come in for particular disapproval, some are scientific terms taken over into common parlance, like "complex," "subconscious," or "neurotic," and others are words like "vital," "creative," "colossal," or "unique," whose misuse and over-use have brought them into disfavor.

It is, of course, next to impossible to lay down generalizations as to what constitutes a word a nuisance and what preserves its value. For it may be deserving of all condemnation when used by one writer and of exceeding great praise when employed by another. With words as with clothes, a style may be good until its adoption by the wrong person, or by too many persons, makes it bad.

In what, indeed, lies the difference between distinguished literary composition and merely competent writing? Is it not, at least in part, that in the one case familiar words are made to display fresh meanings, that they discover a magic by the use of which hidden qualities in what they describe are suddenly revealed, and that in the other they carry nothing but the most commonplace implications? The best writing does not produce its effects by searching out the old, the obsolete, or the esoteric word, but by employing a vocabulary the power of which rests in the nice precision of meaning which its every part is made to yield and in the fine distinctions which its carefully shaded epithet is able to convey. Good writing charms both by virtue of the felicity with which it uses the unexpected and the surprising word and of the freshness with which it uses the familiar one. Young writers especially are wont to ignore this and, because of their usualness, to distrust some of the most admirable words in the language instead of realizing that no word is so customary but that nice application and happy marriage to other words can lend it distinction and dignity.

When the *Manchester Guardian* contestants prescribe such words as "repression," "absolutely," "pseudo," or "picturesque," they are entering a protest, of course, not against their use but against their misuse. They are making, perhaps, unwitting acknowledgment of the fact that it is the very strength of words that sometimes constitutes their weakness. Certain words, and certain types of words, gain wide currency precisely because in their original application by some adept in language they so exactly define their objects that they are immediately taken over by the many who are inexpert at description and are so commonly and constantly employed that they degenerate into platitudes. No one needs to be told how apt slang may appear in its freshness, how apt in fact it is, and how quickly repetition, and extension of its meaning where its meaning does not properly apply, rob it of vigor. The same process holds of words in general. Fortunately, as the *Manchester Guardian* remarks, "one realizes that nuisances, like all things, have their day, and the hour that sees them as nuisances attain their zenith marks the beginning of a drop." Given time, and we may yet recover for literature "cult" and "temperamental," and "dramatic." In the meanwhile, out upon them! They are indisputably nuisances.

Three Swans

By EDWARD DAVISON

FROM a train window—it may have been Virginia
Or further South—a stranger, early wakened
By jolt of brakes and the loud-belling engine,
I saw three swans, white on the dark water
Under a green bank, indolently gliding.
The day looked windless-gray and the sky stormy.
They, unperturbed and imperturbable, shone
In their fixed world serenely: though our clamor
Shook the near trees it had not shaken them.
Then they were gone! Who launched them there,
I wondered,
To flash their alabaster from the willows
On men like me, day-dreaming in the club-car?
Was it some rich man whose half-pride, half pleasure
Turned to new whims long since, and they, forgotten,
Haunt his dark pool, unvisited but content?
Or a young girl who never heard of Leda?
Rain or shine she comes herself to feed them,
Scattering gold sweet-corn-bread in the shallows,
And they all abreast sailing cross the water
Slowly, proud as queens at a queen's banquet,
Or climb the bank to eat from her white hand.
One yields his velvet snow to her caresses,
She feels the strong wings stir under her fingers,
And, in herself, a faint bewildering tremor,
Some touch of the unknown, a sudden heartache.
Poor innocent! Yet she returns tomorrow
To feel again that sweet mysterious trouble.
Or was it some proud immigrant long ago,
Sick in his old age for the land that wronged him,
Jefferson's friend? He robbed the moat at Windsor,
Plotting and bribing with a young sea-captain
To stock America with the King's best brood;
And so, poaching his cygnets over an ocean,
He set them out to breed without a licence.
Praised be the theft! They still are royal birds.
Whoever it was that gave them to the landscape,
Dead or alive, these verses go to thank him.
Would I had met him on his own plantation
To talk in understanding praise of swans,
Not least of their eternal unconcern.

Milton Complete*

By ALEXANDER M. WITHERSPOON
Yale University

IT is a little over a hundred years since Macaulay wrote his great essay on Milton, that essay which effectively crystallized nineteenth century opinion of the poet, and best expressed its homage to him. The occasion of Macaulay's essay was the publication of a translation of Milton's "De Doctrina Christiana," one of his lesser prose works. Macaulay was given, as everyone knows, to using slight occasions as opportunities for great discussions, and almost any text could become with him the pretext for a monumental essay. But if the undistinguished translation of this minor Latin work moved him to such eloquence on behalf of Milton, one wonders to what still greater heights he might have risen could he have reviewed the first two volumes of the great Columbia "Milton" which have this year been given to an expectant world. Here is all the poetry of our great poet, printed at last in a manner worthy of its greatness, in an edition which, for scholarship and typography, for beauty and convenience, for scope and completeness, is a fit medium for that song

That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.

It is such an edition as would have delighted the artistic and fastidious poet himself, who labored always to make his work perfect in his great Taskmaster's eye, and who was not at all careless of its physical appearance. One calls to mind the sardonic joke which he played on William Marshall, who had produced such a travesty of a portrait for the 1645 edition of the poems, and his care, in the case of his prose, to note in his "Faults Escaped in the Printing" even the omission of a comma.

There is a spaciousness, a leisureliness, a lack of haste, and a thoroughness about the Columbia "Milton" which are truly Miltonic, a suggestion of Milton's own "long choosing and beginning late." The first two volumes, which have appeared after twenty-five years of planning and preparation, are in four parts. There are to be sixteen volumes more, and it is proposed to conclude the edition in 1936. Those who know what the preparation of such an edition entails upon its editors will not need to be told, and none others will appreciate, the magnitude of the task. To W. P. Trent, its chief begetter, and to Professor Frank A. Patterson, of Columbia, are due special honors for bringing it into existence. It is characteristic of Milton and of his century that the poems should include verse in Latin, Greek, and Italian, as well as English. The Greek and Latin pieces have been translated by Mr. Charles Knapp, and the Italian verse by Mr. Arthur Livingston. Professor Patterson is the editor of the English poems, Mr. Livingston of the Italian, and Mr. Trent and Mr. T. O. Mabbott of the Latin and Greek. The format, the printing, and the binding are, happily, the work of William Edwin Rudge.

In succeeding volumes there will be, in addition to the major prose works, Milton's letters, his marginal notes in books which he read, and indeed everything that came from his pen or his lips so far as it is humanly possible to procure it. A concluding volume will contain certain doubtful pieces and a bibliography of his works. The edition is, therefore, the complete Milton, and, with the exception of the translations and the textual notes, completely Milton. The editors have wisely kept themselves and their opinions,

* THE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON. New York: Columbia University Press. Vols. I and II, in two parts each. \$10 per vol. Complete set of 18 vols. in 21, \$105.

This Week

"A Richer Dust."

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT.

"Mexico."

Reviewed by ERNEST GRUENING.

"Alexander," "Caesar," "Nero,"
"Alaric."

Reviewed by ALFRED R. BELLINGER.

Pegasus Perplexing: A Charade Contest.

Star-Dust from Mrs. Thrale.

By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Prelude.

By CONRAD AIKEN.

Next Week, or Later

John Keats.

By J. MIDDLETON MURRY.

as well as the opinions of others, out of the work. There is no "memorial introduction" of the Grosart type, and the reader must look elsewhere for biographical information. The curious student who seeks for light on "that two-handed engine at the door," or for a discussion of the provenance of "the star that bids the shepherd fold" will not find them. Here is the text of Milton's works in verse and prose, complete, and, with a very few exceptions, as authentic and perfect as Milton could have wished it. Make what you will of it.

The editors have quoted appropriately at the head of the first volume Macaulay's estimate and summary of Milton's character and achievements. It was Macaulay, I think we may say, who in effect introduced to the nineteenth century a new Milton, the Milton who was a great statesman, patriot and thinker, and perhaps the greatest votary of personal liberty that the English race has ever produced. Milton the poet had, indeed, been known and admired as an Olympian and "the third among the sons of light" for a century and a half. Wordsworth had voiced at the turn of the century the wish that the great poet might be living at that darkest hour of England's history, and four years before the essay Shelley in "Adonais" had invoked anew the lamentations of that most musical of mourners and apostle of liberty. Macaulay was not lacking in praise and appreciation of Milton's poetry, but it was Milton the man, and especially Milton the patriot and statesman, that he held up as an example and a portent. He was the first to draw the attention of the nineteenth century to the wisdom and appositeness of Milton's great prose treatises, styling them enthusiastically "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies," and "a perfect field of cloth of gold." Milton had said that in writing prose he had the use as it were only of his left hand, but it was, after all, the left hand of Milton. And Macaulay wished to hold up this left hand, like Hur at the side of another Moses, that it might once again bring strength and inspiration to the forces of right and light, and discomfit the Amalekites.

Macaulay regretted that Milton's prose should be so inaccessible and so little known. Since his day

it available on the same generous scale as that of the verse. To many it will doubtless come as a surprise that Milton's prose bulks over seven times as large as his poetry, but those who know the real Milton know how much of himself he put into his pamphlets and remonstrances, and how indebted we are to them for many of the details necessary to a complete picture of John Milton.

It would be too much to say that Macaulay introduced a new era in the criticism and appreciation of Milton, but it is not an overstatement that he anticipated the judgment of the twentieth century toward Milton. The present generation has reversed many of Macaulay's decisions and declined to accept many of his judgments, notably in the cases of Johnson and Boswell, of the Cavaliers and the Restoration Wits. With all of these he had scant sympathy, and he treated them with something less than justice. But the opinion of the present day is still in substantial agreement with his judgment of Milton. It is Milton according to the flesh rather than Milton *sub specie æternitatis ac divinitatis* that engages our attention, and it is the economic, social, and political circumstances which helped to fashion him and his works, as well as more purely literary considerations, that made him one of the great figures of the race.

It was once the habit to call Milton a Puritan and to let it go at that. But no such general term is valid any longer. How little they know of Milton who only the Puritan in him know! It is as a child of the Renaissance that he chiefly interests the modern world, and in such recent studies as those of Saurat and Tillyard he has become a focal point in the history of the Renaissance and its late harvest in England. The Columbia "Milton" will offer ample evidence of the truth of the oft-quoted statement that of all men Milton was least qualified to turn Puritan, in the ordinary sense of the word. The terms Cavalier and Puritan have both been badly misused of late, and their historical significance has been almost forgotten. Milton's temperament was by nature what most men now call Cavalier. He was naturally an esthete, a voluptuary, and no English poet who has left records of his life as he lived it has shown himself to be more susceptible to all that the senses may know of beauty and pleasure. Warmth of affection, charm

of manner, and attractiveness of personality are qualities not traditionally associated with Milton, but as the older tradition yields to the newer study of the man he emerges as a singularly lovable and human personality whom "bitter constraint and sad occasion" forced too early and too often into occupations and accents which he would not naturally have chosen. If he kept himself "pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free," it was not because he lacked all the human components which make most men otherwise.



Milton's relations with and attitude towards other men and women are also coming to be viewed in a new and different light. Dr. Johnson, with singular disregard of the facts in the case and in keeping with his prejudice against Milton, declared, for instance, that "Paradise Lost" contains little that is applicable to human interests, and Wordsworth a generation later wrote, for quite different reasons, the impressive but equally untrue words that Milton's soul was like a star and dwelt apart. But one may well ask if there is a single work of Milton's that does not concern itself with some important and pressing problem of human welfare. A fresh examination of his writings will show that there are few problems that man has to solve, whether for this world or for that which is to come, that Milton has not dealt with. Love, marriage, divorce, free will, personal liberty, the despotic use of power, the right to revolt, censorship, government by proscription, education, religion, art, poetry, music—what is there that he has left untouched? And which other of our great authors has so thoroughly and so constantly adopted for himself the Terentian rule of *nihil humani alienum*? It may with much force be argued that his Satan is the greatest character that English poetry or fiction has ever produced—if not the greatest, surely the most magnificently, tragically human figure in our literature.

Nor, as has so often been assumed, does Milton's concern with human nature have to do entirely, or chiefly with man as an immortal soul, a citizen of the City of God, and a mere factor in theological problems. It is man and woman in this world, and man's happiness here and now, that he makes his theme. Milton's God has been traditionally disliked as an

tions of seventeenth century Protestant theology and the spirit of the time did not permit either a sentimentally amiable portrait of God the Father or the resolution of the Almighty into a cosmic force or a mathematical formula. But the "Paradise Lost" as well as the earlier tractates, if they be well read, testify to the existence of a God who, whatever else He may be, is the Father and Creator of man, and the champion of his happiness in this world as well as in heaven. Man, in both Milton's poetry and prose, is the very centre of the cosmos, and his appearance in it, one may say, is that divine event toward which the whole creation has been moving. He is the favorite and the darling of God; all the powers of heaven and all the devils of hell consider him worth their attention, and his abode, the happy garden, becomes the battleground of the forces of good and evil. Many readers of today are likely to find much of the spirit and most of the letter of Milton's theology, like that of Dante, unconvincing, but the essential excellence of neither Dante nor Milton is thereby impaired. If it is a question of God, who was ever less inclined than Milton to limit and confine to any particular form that "bright effluence of bright essence increate"? If of heaven and hell—though as a poet he portrayed the physical aspects of both—Milton offers perhaps the most satisfactory statement of the situation:

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n.

The publication of this complete edition of Milton comes at a time when many of the problems he faced are agitating men's minds more than they have at any time since his day. It has been remarked that there is hardly a question that is alive and pressing for settlement in the world of today that was not vexing the world of the seventeenth century. Macaulay found Milton's discussions pertinent to conditions existing a hundred years ago, and a century more of time has unfortunately not made them less apposite to the problems of England and America. There are some half a dozen matters which have during the present year especially agitated the minds of both continents, calling forth papal encyclicals, ecclesiastical resolutions, governmental pronouncements, columns

of editorial comment, and unlimited discussion, and which seem as far from solution as ever,—the question of the relations of the State and the individual citizen, of the Church and the individual, of the State and the Church, of the theory and the practice of censorship, of the scope and aims of education, the problems of marriage and the question of divorce. On all these Milton had very definite views, and what he said is still worth heeding.

His "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates" might almost have served as the inspiration of the Declaration of Independence, and today, as has been recently said, if one will substitute for "king" the word "millionaire" or the title of some other of our rulers, the document is still a tract for the times. There is his "Letter on Education," and when one has made allowances for all the differences between the circumstances and requirements of sons of English gentlemen in the seventeenth century and those of sons and daughters of Englishmen and Americans in the twentieth, the general principles of Milton's tractate still remain sound and unassailable. Milton himself, were he living at this hour, would not prescribe the exact curriculum and the identical methods which he advocated for a selected group of youths in 1644, but has the end and aim, the be-all and end-all, of the education of youth ever been better stated than in his own words: "I call therefore a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of peace and war"? Dr. Johnson insisted that Milton was legislating herein for a college of young Miltons, and it must be confessed that the author of "Paradise Lost" always paid man the compliment of considering him but little lower than the angels. But in a day like ours, when the tendency is to lower educational standards almost beyond the point of visibility, Milton's program for the youth of his day should prove a healthy reminder of heights that once were scaled and of standards that might well again be rallied to.



"The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" was set forth three hundred years ago, but have the laws and statutes which govern marriage in the twentieth century yet attained unto the system of morality and the

more of the soul and spirit than of the body. Mental and spiritual incompatibility, as well as physical incompetence, it declares, should abrogate and in effect does abrogate wedlock, since it renders the chief purpose of the union impossible of achievement; that marriage was instituted for man, and not man for marriage. Time and change have made obsolete and inapplicable some of the details of Milton's argument, but with his conclusions no intelligent man or woman can fail to be impressed. Perhaps Milton's views are still too revolutionary for such a world and for such beings as we. Russia is the only country of the civilized world, I believe, where self-determined incompatibility is ample ground for divorce, which may be self-imposed. But as a contribution to the discussion of a universally perplexing social question the "Doctrine and Discipline" should be known to all intelligent people. And throughout all of it runs the increasing Miltonic purpose of securing the maximum of freedom and happiness for the individual man and woman, and releasing them from the thralldom of a tyrannical and unjust law: "I doubt not but with one gentle stroking to wipe away ten thousand tears out of the life of man."

It is chiefly in the "Areopagitica," an address to the Parliament of England for the liberty of unlicensed printing, that Milton's words come home, or should come home, to the England and America of 1931. It should be prescribed reading for all those in authority and all those who advocate censorship in any form. It is the most thorough and eloquent answer in the language to those who would make saints by act of Parliament, or sober men and women by constitutional amendment; and a standing rebuke to those who set themselves up as rulers and governors of other men's reading and writing and eating and drinking. The particular circumstances under which the speech was written may be different, but the principles which he lays down were never more applicable than now.

Wholesome meats to a vitiated stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome; and best books to a naughty mind are not unapplicable to occasions of evil. . . . He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered vir-

tue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary. . . . If every action which is good or evil in man at ripe years were to be under pittance and prescription and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what grammar to be sober, just, or continent? . . . when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing. . . . Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercised in any heritage, ye cannot make them chaste that came not thither so. . . . And were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil-doing. For God sure esteems the growth and completing of one virtuous person more than the restraint of ten vicious.

It would be hard to over-estimate the timeliness of Milton's discussion of the evils and absurdities which censorship, proscription, and prohibition bring with them—the danger of forgetting the end in the elaborate attention to the means of enforcing the law, the preoccupation with the mint and anise and cummin of technicalities, and the neglect of weightier matters. Matthew Arnold stigmatized the Puritans as “fanatics of the *what*, neglecters of the *why*.” The Puritanism of John Milton was assuredly of another stripe.

It is too much to expect that the twentieth century will give its days and nights to the study of Milton. One of his successors in the poetic tradition at Cambridge has doubtless spoken for this generation in declaring that

Malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man,

and our ears are not attuned to the wave-length of Miltonic prose and rhyme. But the editors of the Columbia “Milton” have seen to it that we shall have a complete and authentic edition of his works to turn to whenever we feel so disposed. Principal Caird of Balliol was visited on his deathbed by his friend, Bishop Gore, who found him reading St. Augustine's “Confessions.” The old man turned to Dr. Gore and remarked, “Whatever the philosophers may say about the answers this man gave to the problems he raised, they must admit that he asked the right questions.” Of Milton it must be said that he, too, asked the right questions about man's duty and his destiny, and if the publication of this new edition of his works can, by turning our minds again to Milton, cause us to ask the questions that he asked, and as honestly try to answer them, the editors will not have labored in vain.

A Yorkshire Sage

A RICHER DUST. By STORM JAMESON. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS volume brings to a conclusion the trilogy of a Yorkshire ship-building family that was begun in “The Lovely Ship” and continued in “The Voyage Home.” The completed work suggests a comparison with “The Forsyte Saga,” for although “The Lovely Ship” is almost fifty years earlier in setting than “The Man of Property,” the general course of both trilogies is the same; each begins with a group of characters firmly convinced of the supreme value of private property, the rightness of *laissez-faire*, and the authority of a rigid moral code that did not prohibit commercial piracy and domestic cruelty; and each traces the rise of a generation that has let go all these convictions, that tries to be kinder and more tolerant, but without any such clear idea of how to accomplish its aims as the Victorians had. And in both the character who most wins admiration and affection is the Victorian protagonist—Soames Forsyte or Mary Hervey—in-sular, prejudiced, outspoken, strong-willed, and stout-hearted.

“A Richer Dust” shows old Mary Hervey faced for the first time with difficulties that are too much for her. She has always hated change; she resisted the introduction of steam and of iron ships, and the rise of the workmen's unions; but her native common sense warned her when resistance was useless, and she made excellent terms for herself with the innovations, and kept her own way in spite of them. But now the whole of time and the world are against her; the grandson on whom she had counted as an heir fights through the war, and comes out with the common feeling that there is not much in the world that is worth while, and certainly money-making with the way made quite easy beforehand is not. Mary's own prejudices, which have served her well, lead her astray at last; she has a granddaughter, the child

of a daughter of whose marriage she disapproved, who might take her place, being just such a forceful girl as she herself was at eighteen; but partly from resentment at her daughter's marriage and partly from the conviction of her generation that women are worthless creatures, Mary will not give her her chance. Before she dies, Mary Hervey sees the firm pass into the hands of strangers, and is put to it to know what to do with the fortune she has made; but she does not pity herself, and in your admiration you cannot find room to pity her.

So long as Mary is on the stage, she commands the keenest interest. One's attention is so centered on her that although when at the end she dies she leaves the affairs of the minor characters in the greatest confusion, one does not even ask what becomes of them, as one loses interest in the invasion of Denmark after the death of Hamlet. But too much of the book is Hamlet without the prince; Mary is too often absent for chapters at a time, and among her puzzled, uncertain grandchildren there is none who can absorb our minds as she can. In much of “A Richer Dust,” reading it after its predecessors, one feels the same disappointment that one felt in “To Let” after “The Man of Property.” It is quite unfair to blame the author; it is the aim of the earlier books to present a picture of a consistent, unified



JOHN MILTON IN HIS YOUTH.

society, and of their sequels to portray a world that cannot tell where it would like to go; and, what is perhaps more important, the earlier society one can see in perspective, the present one cannot. We can now appraise the virtues and failings of the Victorians, and will accept Mary Hervey and Soames as typical, we can only hope that Fleur and Mary's grandson Nicholas Roxby, who drifts into the antique business because he cannot make up his mind what he wants to do, and allows his life to be shaped by an infatuation for a woman whom he must perceive to be nothing, are not equally representative of us.

Time will tell how Miss Jameson has served the present generation; it is certain that she has done well by the past. All the strength and weakness of the Manchester School is here (and when Mary pulls down the poster announcing that her firm believes in Service, one feels that the Manchester School has still something to teach us); it gives a remarkable understanding of one of the most important phases of nineteenth century England.

The original manuscript of Sir Walter Scott's unfinished and unpublished novel, “The Siege of Malta,” has just been privately purchased from General Maxwell-Scott by Gabriel Wells of New York. Scott intended it as the last of the Waverley Novels, and this manuscript, running to more than three-quarters of the projected novel, was written during his rest cure in Malta and Naples, beginning about Jan. 6, 1832. Even in its unfinished state it contains some 85,000 words. Scott predicted for the book an immediate sale of 2,800 copies, writing to J. G. Lockhart, his biographer, that he hoped through it to attain his object of “expiring as rich a man as I could desire in my own freehold.” The copyright of this unpublished work goes with the manuscript.

“Civilized” versus Primitive

MEXICO: A STUDY OF TWO AMERICAS.

By STUART CHASE, in collaboration with MARIAN TYLER. Illustrated by DIEGO RIVERA. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by ERNEST GRUENING

FOR some years Stuart Chase has been eyeing the American scene with a penetrating gaze and analyzing its foibles—economic foibles, especially—with shrewd objectiveness couched in graphic and highly entertaining metaphor. He has been the machine's traditional “best friend and severest critic.”

A year and a half ago he returned from Mexico—his bags bulging with pottery and *serapes*, products of the native craftsmanship—to the metropolis of this “land of plenty” to find entry to his apartment blocked by a bread line. This ironic contrast between that poverty-stricken land where virtually no one was hungry or unemployed, and our own richest country on earth where surplus and starvation were clinched in a *danse macabre*, furnished a theme which, first developed in a magazine article, beckoned invitingly for expansion into book form. “Mexico, A Study in Two Americas” resulted.

Appearing some twenty-one months after the collapse of the Great Illusion, this study could scarcely be more timely or appropriate. It gives voice to the thoughts and feelings expressed, or dimly sensed, by a vast and increasing number of Americans. A book about Mexico, it is essentially a sermon for the inhabitants of these United States. In vivid colors it depicts the contrasting culture below the Rio Grande. There, with due allowance for certain exceptions, while material standards of living may be low, there is no destitution; no latest models of motor-car, electric refrigeration, or radio, but no fear of inability to keep up instalment payments; no “prosperity,” but no unemployment; “wantlessness,” yet contentment.

The bases for comparison are “Middletown,” pen-name for Muncie, Indiana, whose *mores* the Lynds recorded, and a corresponding survey of a mountain town in Morelos, entitled “Tepoztlan, A Mexican Village,” by Robert Redfield, University of Chicago anthropologist. Mr. Chase's contrasts, based on the material in these studies, are found in these excerpts:

The gospel of Middletown is work, and the gospel of Tepoztlan is play—one day in three, the year around, the southern community is celebrating a major or minor fiesta. Yet, for all their hard work, a fraction of the men in Middletown is constantly unemployed and bowed down with fear and worry. Unemployment is unheard of in Tepoztlan. . . . Business depressions do not affect a handicraft culture. Cut off from the outside world, she would eat just as well as heretofore. . . . At a pinch she can feed herself.

Likewise the houses of Tepoztlan are built of local material, and each constructed by the man who will dwell therein. The clothing of its inhabitants never goes out of style. The community is virtually self-sufficient, self-contained, independent of national “hard times,” unaffected by world crises.

By contrast in Middletown, “there is no trace of local or regional economic self-sufficiency; the community is locked beyond recall into the highly delicate and interdependent economy of two hemispheres.” If rubber in the tropics fails, Middletown, without motor cars, would be lost. Ninety-nine per cent of its products are shipped out, and but one per cent is locally consumed. “If these far markets fail—as they do to-day—repercussion is quick and deadly. The men of Middletown are on the streets. Cash they must have or starve.” As wages and cash decline, purchasing power sinks with them, local merchants cease to make profits, the vicious circle of unemployment widens, “for rent” signs appear, “a bank gurgles and expires, carrying the savings of a thousand households. . . . The future hangs like a great black raven over Middletown. In Tepoztlan the sky is clear.”

So much for the economic contrast. What about individual happiness and self-sufficiency? In Tepoztlan, Mr. Chase insists, “nobody starves spiritually or physically.” At labor he notes the natives’

dexterous fingers, their timeless patience, their concentrated interest as they weave and cut and hammer something a little different than anyone else has made. They punch no time clocks, prepare no job tickets, visit no employment offices, receive no welfare work, say yessir to no boss. They work when they feel like it, stop when they feel like it, sleep when they feel like it.

Yet “in actual preparation for life, Tepoztlan's educational methods are superior to Middletown's.”