

Poor Georgie

THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER. By RICHARD ALDINGTON. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE DANGERFIELD

"GEORGIE," says one conservative English weekly, "deserves to be as memorable as Tess." "Mr. Aldington," says another, "has written a novel which is in the great tradition of English satire." But if "The Colonel's Daughter" has been received with rejoicing in Philistia, it can only be because it is not the sort of novel Mr. Aldington was expected to write. I do not think it is the sort of novel Mr. Aldington should have written. Of the two statements quoted above the first will bear the closer examination, for Mr. Aldington has approached the character of Georgina Smithers with a certain pity and understanding. She is the daughter of Frederick Smithers, Lieutenant Colonel retired, and she is one of those million women whose possible husbands were killed in the Great War. She lives in a little country village, and we are shown how she stumbles from one embarrassing situation to another, making tentative and rejected advances to the vicar, being given a mawkish and unpleasant initiation into "life" by a middle-aged literary gentleman, falling in love with her stupid colonial cousin and seeing him taken away from her by the only acquaintance of her own age. Georgie, with her ugly face and her splendid figure, with her awkward dignity which only comes to help her too late in the day, with her unrelated fragments of intelligence and her blind obedience to the dullest side of Erastianism . . . "poor Georgie" is condemned in the end to bicycle every day seven miles to the nearest town for groceries until she is too old to bicycle any more. Her tragedy is that she is to have no tragedy. But she is not a modern Tess. It may well be that one of Tess's claims to immortality is that she was the first country nymph to be properly "tumbled in the hay" since the good days of Fielding; but in all that followed that interesting event she remained a memorable tragic figure simply because she could not be pigeonholed. Her importance lay in what she was, not in what she represented. Georgie Smithers, on the other hand, never comes outside her type; and while it is a type worth the writing about, it cannot be offered as a valid excuse for the satire that is built about it.

I do not mean that "The Colonel's Daughter" is not a readable book. Quite the contrary. But it is readable because Aldington is a master of circumstance, and because he employs all those little devices and ingenuities which we do not really care to connect with a writer of his distinction. As for the satire, it is neither dangerous nor original: it is an expression of hackneyed dislike for the hackneyed shortcomings of the British upper middle classes. Moreover there is something histrionic about the characters and the story; and if there is no ranting to the first and no creaking in the second that is only because Mr. Aldington is a skilful producer. One incident at least not all his skill can save; it discloses not only the essential falseness of the book, but also the sort of influence which has come to bear upon it. The Smithers' servant girl shows signs of becoming an unmarried mother—a pretty common phenomenon in English villages, and one which gentle and simple alike accept with a certain resignation. But Mr. Aldington's characters take their cues; with the violent precision of actors in a stock comedy they walk into their camps, and come forth from thence to do battle over the wretched couple. Shall they be called "respectable"?—shall the prospective father keep his job?—shall they be given a cottage?—shall the wedding be made a social success? There follows the astonishing comment: "In such batrachomyomachia are expended the energies of a great Imperial people."

Here, I think, we see, peering over the author's shoulder, the face of the classical Mr. Ezra Pound. Having no lexicon at hand I should like to ask Mr. Aldington what his enormous word means—(there seems to be something about "frog" and something about "battle" in it)—and why one should be forced to wrestle with it in any case. For it seems a pity that he should waste his sounding Greek on a great Imperial people which, if the sad truth be told, would not be noticeably affected were Aristophanes himself to rise from the dead and write against it. A simpler irony would have served his purpose.

If we explore the nature of his satire with any kind of thoroughness, we shall stumble in the end against this sort of conversation: "Jove, I'll give 'em a joint weddin and christenin present." Here is the heart of

the matter, in the two words—"weddin" and "christenin." However much he may tilt at the hypocrisy and the false morality and the stupidity of his people, in these two words and their like is concealed his real venom. He has fixed a gulf between weddin and weddin', between christenin and christenin—an arbitrary gulf, separating the affected from the colloquial speech; and there is no doubt at all that it all looks vastly satirical. But what is the value of a satire that depends (as Mr. Aldington's does depend to a quite remarkable extent) upon a discarded apostrophe? And as for the dropped g, if Mr. Aldington has read his "Paston Letters" he will remember that the landed and semi-landed gentry of England also dropped their g's in the fifteenth century. It is quite ancient history.

And perhaps there is nothing very new about the inhabitants of his English village—a catholic but familiar collection: the profiteer baronet, the literary gentleman, the retired colonel, the venomous old lady, the bachelor parson, the Scotch doctor. We have met them all before, on the stage, in comic papers, in all kinds of fiction: and they are all a little battered by time. They have been knocked down so often. But he sets them up again with tremendous care, takes his diabolical aim . . . and the poor creatures bite the dust for the hundredth time. Clad in the armor of righteousness, Mr. Aldington makes a brave show; but he is quite safe. They won't answer him back. They never have. Repartee is not their strong point.

Something about Everything

MOST WOMEN. . . . By ALEC WAUGH. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM

"MOST Women . . ." says Alec Waugh, and then proceeds to tell a little something about almost everything under the sun. These stories of women are imbedded deep in personal reminiscences of such imagination-firing and ear-filling places as Chiangmai, Hayti, Penang, Martinique, Villefranche-sur-Mer, Tahiti. But wherever Mr. Waugh goes, there go mystery and romance, and Mr. Waugh finds them. Of one country, he says that it is "distant, strange, mysterious." And that country is these United States of North America.

It is a pleasant and extremely depersonalizing experience to read Alec Waugh on what might be known as "us." He sets out with no grimly determined thesis that Americans are some particular this or that and it's high time the world realized it. He sees us steadily, if not whole, and he finds us—different. And we, seeing ourselves through foreign eyes, find ourselves different, and we become, through his sympathetic observation, not just the economic cogs of M. André Siegfried, or the predigested-culture gobblers of Mr. J. B. Priestley, or the saviors of the human race of Herr Müller-Sturmheim, or even our ordinary roustabout selves. If the book did nothing but place us in Waugh's uncatalogued Marco Polo world it would deserve a patriotic perusal; but it does several other things as well.

"Most Women . . ." is a companion volume to "Hot Countries" in more than format. For, although San Francisco, New Orleans, and New York do figure in the later volume, most of it deals with the same sun-drenched locales as its predecessor and certainly no one has ever denied that women played an important part in "Hot Countries." Just what the present intriguingly unfinished title implies is not easy to decide, for the stories point to no obvious generalizations in regard to women under their skin unless it be that their chief significance is to be found in their relation to man, and that is scarcely peculiar to Mr. Waugh. A good many of them show striking resemblances to those vigorous and unsentimental lady-spiders who refresh themselves, after the fatigues of love, by devouring their lovers, but not all of them. Since Mr. Waugh himself says that he is trying to show how "the same flower will grow differently in different soils . . . and not how the Martinique woman is different from the Malay, or the English woman from the American, but how in different settings, the same emotion will flow differently," there is perhaps no one unchangeable ending for his title.

George Santayana has somewhere said that comparison is a makeshift used by those incapable of understanding the essence of the things compared. A chill saying for the glib travel commentator who finds it sufficient to point out the similarities and dissimilarities to home in any strange environment. Mr. Waugh

is unusually free from this tendency. He approaches each new prospect as a thing in itself. He delights in its detail as pertaining to it and not as any phantom doppelgänger of places known before. He sees what is before him, and presents what he sees, with the added increment of his own emotional response to it. Moral and economic considerations are of much less importance to Mr. Waugh than the reason why followers of the Tahitan Atahoe wear a white flower over the right ear before they find love and over the left ear afterwards. But who reads Mr. Waugh for economics or morals?

It is possible that if the Polynesians read Mr. Waugh they might be as surprised at some of his findings as Americans may be at his assumption that American fathers look with pleasant unconcern upon sons who borrow money from women and that the property rights for women here were as equitable sixty years ago as they are today. But it is more probable that the Polynesians would find him, as do we, a zestful expounder of hot countries and women.

Adventures in Self

HALFWAY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By CECIL ROBERTS. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1931. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HENRY WALCOTT BOYNTON

IN taking to autobiography, youth seems to have snatched away the last perquisite of trembling old. "Half Way," by Cecil Roberts, has the complacency and effrontery of its kind. It is exhibit A by an exhibitionist of the post-Shavian school, facile, jaunty, and callow. This author, at thirty-five, appears to have been somewhat spoiled by a generation that adores facility and jauntiness, and the aspect of callowness called sophistication. You may range him by noting that he is hand in glove with Beverly Nichols to such a degree that we are uncertain whether these two do not admire each other even more than they admire themselves. Both have spent the decade and a half of their majority pushing along in "the writing game," with only determination, impudence, and moderate talents to help them. Cecil Roberts points with pride to the resultant achievement. He has not quite saved the twenty thousand pounds he had hoped for by this date, but is well on his way toward it. He has edited newspapers, written novels, traveled widely, adventured as war correspondent, and done four profitable lecture tours in America. He says sharp things about foreigners who try to lecture over here without any ability to speak in public. He himself, it seems, lectures admirably. The dictum of an American interviewer is quoted with complacency: "He lectures better than he writes, perhaps because it would be impossible for anybody to write better than he lectures." This does not precisely make sense, but has a generous effect of buttering the subject on both sides. A little later, Beverly Nichols is cited *in re* the Roberts nature and genius. The most important thing about him, says Nichols, is his artistic temperament: "You never know, when you ask him to dine, who is going to arrive. It may be Cecil Roberts the poet, who wants melon and an omelette, or Cecil the novelist, who wants a mixed grill, or Cecil the business man, who eats nothing but beefsteak. . . ." This is piffle, but not mincing piffle like the passage in which brother Roberts returns tit for the Nichols tat;

Beverly openly takes the greatest delight in himself. And why not? He can be chameleonic. One day he is ruined, the next a grand seigneur. . . . But you must admit he is vital. He will touch a piano, and Chopin breathes again; he will talk, and you will know conversation can be an unconscious art; he will suddenly look at you, and the young Shelley stands there to become the next moment a faun stirred by the music of Debussy.

Let me scratch your back, dear brother faun, and you shall scratch mine. My niminy for your piminy. This is Robert's style at its worst. He says a good deal about his search for the *mot juste* and so on, but his manner at best is that of a weather-worn journalist groping among the literary tricks of his time.

Really the basic quality of the book, under its affectation of hardness, is sentimentalism. The autobiographer is sentimental first of all about himself. He never tires of pondering his case, and submitting his conclusions: "I am audacious because I am nervous, fitfully egotistical because I am shy. . . ." Ho hum! It may be true, but who cares? The little Pepyses à faire begin to be a bore. This one may have a sure-fire formula for feminine lecture-goers (whom he does not fail to laugh at) the brisk tongue and above it the languishing eye. The tongue is an accident of the calendar, his eye might well be gleaming above

a set of Victorian whiskers. Even his frankness falls short of the best standards, ancient or modern. He is frank about the fact of divers amorous episodes in his experience, but denies us the details. How can he look his elders in the face, a Moore, or a Dreiser, not to speak of closer contemporaries? And how dares he dwell so insistently on his long devotion to his mother, with his own generation waiting to attach a familiar "complex" label thereto?

Apart from its personal aspect, the book offers much interesting material in the way of sketch, portrait, and anecdote. Cecil Roberts has had many extraordinary adventures. He has had the knack of assisting at some great moments in the world's story. He is one of your born collectors of great names, has the heaven-born faculty of consorting with eminence. One of his best anecdotes is about his first meeting with Bernard Shaw. Roberts was in a London swimming-pool when a recognizable head suddenly popped up from the water, just before him: "Hastily I gasped, 'You are Shaw!'" Whereupon the senior Showman, always on the job, flashed back, "Young man, I am certain of nothing." The next moment he had vanished under the water."



The Aged Poet Discourses

HERE by this round-head barrow,
Watching the shadow creep to the rose
campion yonder,
I feel the pull of the time-stream. . . .

Long since it sucked from me all my male potency,
Creasing my shrunken belly with wave marks.

Here, in the sun-sleeked silence
My mind is loosed and aloft as an eyas,
Descrying my life in the time-stream,
Flaccid as weed, taking color and motion
From the sea's swindling mystery.

What becomes of that life, pulled free of its reef of
being?

Not this body of my members,
But the body of wish and unwish, contacts, repulsions.
. . . There's nothing shores you in like a good hate,
As the scar of a wound holds when the clean flesh
sunders.—

Here's all this for which my body is merely the—
The "plant." Exactly.
How you Americans do get a grip on the terms of
materiality!

When the plant is duly resolved to salts and gasses
What becomes of the product, adrift in the time-
stream

For any lackey of letters to piece into his livry?

Look what the penny curious have done to Shelley!

What was it I read yesterday of Heliodorus,
How he loved roasted turnips,
Or one of his mistresses had a skewed eyebrow?
That sort of thing! intact in the time-stream,
The Continuum, the Something, the Remembers—
Call it God then.

Could God remember the eyebrow of Heliodorus'
mistress

And utterly loose Heliodorus out of his consciousness?
Say He forgot the way of a bird's wing in the air
Or my life's smallest instant?

Wouldn't the Universe come crashing together?
Suppose when I go under, some small wares
Loose in my mind's pocket, songs not quite shaped,
The temper I was in about my pudding yesterday,
Do come ashore, to be picked up by a professional
ghost raiser,

At a dollar a ghost. . . ?

Totheridge, at the home farm there, lost a son at
Ypres.

Corporal with scout detachment. Last thing they
heard

Was his high, country sing-song,—
Come on you swine, you! Come— Then the shell
burst.

Nothing, not even an eyebrow, recognizable.

Later one of these London mediums gets hold of the
boy's mother.

As I understand it the medium runs up his own mind
Like a—what's the term? Aerial? Thank you—
Mixed with a lot of unintelligible patter,
Comes through the boy's name for his first dog,
And a trick his mother used to get him up mornings,
Thick with good country sleep.
But is that the sort of thing
A discarnate intelligence concerns itself about?

Touching Totheridge's case, I admit
After such a storm as this war, there'd be wreckage.
Hours on my quiet lawn, when Totheridge's cows
Form single file at the gatehead, and the round-
voiced maids

Come thudding their pails in the dew,
Thoughts of our simple, south country lads
Troop homeward, like doves to their proper cotes.
You've noticed? There's a sadness since
Falling through all the pleasant air of England.

. . . This new concept of Time as the measure of
Consciousness

Tracking its way through space . . .

Lying awake at night

Through great arcs of the earth-swing,—
So well have I learned my task of awareness
I need very little sleep to rest me from it—
Death seems merely the notice of disembarkation,
From which we find ourselves
High on the coast of eternal Nowness.

Wouldn't millions of us, if we could,
Scurry back into the time-stream
Like sand hoppers from a high flung wave mark?
Wouldn't we go haunting the spot of our disem-
barkation,
Familiarly spaced with a past, present, and future?

Yesterday Hernshaw and I
Talked as men talk after forty years of friendship,
As moored boats in a fairway
Jib and fall with a self-same motion,
Talked and were still. All at once, and surely,
I was aware of a Presence, hailing me softly
By an old name and precious.

Hernshaw's rose-slip daughter . . . budded out of
his flesh . . .

Twenty years since she left us,
Taking love too hard and life too lightly.
Suddenly, there she stirred, where I was closest,
Inside him. . . .
As a flower unclosing in darkness
Touches the sense by nuances too slight for naming.
"Alice!" I answered.
Hernshaw soothed me, "Alice is dead, you know."
Thinking I maundered.

What's dead, but set free from Time-space?

Where else could she go, by timelessness affrighted
Whom her own time so dismayed?
I remember her first excursions from my chair to his,
Not essaying the path till Hernshaw's hand
Made it warm and familiar . . .
Back from the Now she had slipped to the safe shape
of his being.

Shall we be free, indeed, who are not affrighted,
Ranging the centuries as children a brookside?
Or seek by some such compulsion
As drives the sea trout to the waters that spawned
him,
Through infinite, curved spaces,
Till we have absorbed all times into ourselves
And so achieved Godhead?

MARY AUSTIN.

Lord Riddell, speaking recently at a literary lunch-
eon in London, declared that he wanted statesmen
to write biographies of each other—Mr. Ramsay
MacDonald on Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Winston
Churchill on Mr. MacDonald, and so on. He wants
frank character sketches for publication thirty years
hence and thinks they would be better than the
performances of professional biographers.

Pegasus Perplexing



NUMBER XXI

Who followed my second and third and last,
As she chased the flying stag,
Though mortal man were never so fast,
Was ever the first to flag.

And all my first would he remain
Till a stricken man he died,
To pay the price of an act profane
While she was speeding over the plain
Or up the mountain side.

And never a man that men shall know
Shall follow her in the chase,
(Though he shoot like the lord of the silver bow)
In a dauntless, desperate race.

Not even my first and second and third
Her glorious paths could tread,
Though he ran with the sweep of a swooping bird
And a step so light that no man heard,
A huntsman born and bred.

In the ocean deeps, on the mountain steep,
You will look for my whole in vain.
You will find my whole where the prairies roll
Their billows of golden grain.
Where the winds that pass through the waving grass
In the summer whispering low

Shall leap up higher in prairie fire,
Or rise in wrath on the cyclone's path,
And lash the grain with the hurricane
When the wild tornadoes blow.

NUMBER XXII

'Tis a wonder what things they will make us believe,
Those poets without an intent to deceive:
There's one of their sayings from which we might
gather
That my first is the sire of his obvious father.

My next an effective protection and shade is
To some kinds of men and to all kinds of ladies.
My whole is a state of comparative purity
Through which we must pass on the road to maturity.

With the charades printed above the Pegasus
Perplexing contest comes to a conclusion. En-
trants are urged to read the Rules which fol-
low with care before submitting their answers.
Only such answers as are postmarked not later
than midnight of September tenth will be con-
sidered.

Special attention is called to the fact that the
Charades in the issue of July 11 were misnum-
bered. In order to avoid confusion, com-
petitors in submitting answers should number
the Charades in the issue of July 4, VIIa and
VIIb, and those in the issue of July 11, VIIb
and VIIc.

It should also be particularly noted that since
the answer to Charade Number X in the issue
of July 18 had been revealed in the article in-
troducing the Pegasus Perplexing contest, a
substitute Charade was presented in the issue
of August 1. It should be numbered X.

RULES

Throughout the summer months *The Saturday Review*
will publish two charades in each issue of the magazine.
The last charade to appear in the issue of August twenty-
ninth.

It is our hope that readers of the paper will be interested
in solving these puzzles and will submit answers at the
conclusion of the contest. Prizes will consist of copies of
the book from which the charades are taken, "Pegasus
Perplexing," by Le Baron Russell Briggs, to be published
by The Viking Press at the conclusion of the contest.

Contestants must solve correctly at least ten of the
twenty-four charades in order to qualify. A prize will be
awarded for each of the 100 highest scores obtained by
those who qualify.

The highest score will win a copy of the book specially
bound in leather.

In case of ties each tying competitor will receive the
award.

Solve the charades each week as they appear, but do
not send in your answers until the last charade is published
on August twenty-ninth.

In submitting answers merely number them to correspond
with the number of the charade to which they apply and
mail the list to Contest Editor, *The Saturday Review*, 25
West 45th Street, New York City.

All answers must be mailed not later than midnight of
September tenth, 1931.

It is not required that competitors subscribe to the
Saturday Review; copies of the magazine are available for
free examination at public libraries or at the office of pub-
lication. The contest is open to everyone except employees
of the *Saturday Review* and The Viking Press.

The accuracy of the answers will be verified by the edi-
tors of the *Saturday Review*.