

help to make the satisfactory life, but they do not of themselves give the spiritual right. The heavenly destiny, the gift of turning visions into realities, is personal and inherent. The culture which came to Mrs. Richards by inheritance, the insatiable love of books, the tradition of service, the standards of thought and conduct which belong and give grace to the best of New England, she has maintained and passed on. After many stories she has written her life with the easy skill that makes it read like a story. It is in such lives that our essential civilization and its hopes consist.

## Historical Tales

THE VIRTUOUS KNIGHT. By ROBERT EMMET SHERWOOD. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1931. \$2.50.

THE FLAME ON ETHIRDOVA. By HECTOR BOLITHO. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

IN "The Virtuous Knight" Mr. Sherwood attempts to apply the formula of "The Road to Rome" to a story about the Third Crusade and succeeds in demonstrating how much easier it is to write a satisfactory historical play than an equally satisfactory historical novel. Not that there was so much history about the "Road to Rome," but for two hours on the stage it was amusing to hear Carthaginian mercenaries talk like characters in "What Price Glory?" and to be shown that senators are senators whether they wear frock coats or togas. Stripped of the glamor of the stage and reduced to cold print, similar demonstrations about the contemporaries of Richard Cœur de Lion merely leave the reader skeptical of what seems to be too facile a substitute for genuine historical imagination.

A novelist cannot rely on the physical presence of his actors to carry conviction. Also a novelist has to go into details that a playwright can leave to the imagination of his audience or the ingenuity of his director and in going into details a novelist gets into trouble. Mr. Sherwood has undoubtedly read the latest books on the Third Crusade—to prove it he puts the interpretations of twentieth century historians into the mouths of his twelfth century characters—but he is not at home in his period. Such quaint notions as that a squire of the body was not a fighting man, that Omar Khayyam wrote in Arabic, that the organization of infantry in the twelfth century was analogous to that of modern armies betray his lack of ease no less certainly than his tendency to borrow his *decors*, Western or Oriental, from Hollywood. But slips like these do not matter to the essence of his story. What does matter is revealed in his cavalier assumption that a Norman-English noble reared in the reign of Henry II would be repelled by the west front of Chartres because its sculptors lacked the "skill," the sense of "grace and form" which at once attracted him in the fragment of a classical torso—in other words that the average Norman's view of life in the twelfth century was no different from that of the average American in the twentieth.

Mr. Sherwood tries to tell how a naive young crusader is led by his experiences in Syria and his contact with the older and wiser civilization of the East to abandon the faith of his fathers and take refuge in scepticism. Perhaps such things happened, and the idea is not without interest. But to write movingly of such a loss of faith, one must have some imaginative insight into an age when faith was the mainspring of society, one must have some sympathy with characters to whom faith was real. To Mr. Sherwood, medieval Christianity is only a sorry and debasing superstition; the whole chivalric way of life is merely ridiculous. Starting from such a premise his story is bound to ring false.

An artist who wishes to create a convincing picture of a distant time and place must have the fullest imaginative sympathy with its peculiar way of looking at the world. It is just his grasp of

this fundamental necessity that makes Mr. Hector Bolitho's "The Flame on Ethirdova" ring true. The monastery on Ethirdova was founded in a time that can only be denoted as "The Middle Ages"—it couldn't actually have been at any historical time in them or at any particular place—and no glamor from the pages of children's histories is borrowed to cover it. The legend of its patron saint, its founder, and its subsequent destruction is told simply, almost baldly, without apology or sophistication. The characters are lightly but firmly sketched, there is little attempt at pictorial local color, there can hardly be said to be a plot. If there is any allegory it is obscure. Miracles are recorded as calmly and with as little explanation as they would be by St. Gregory, and the moral judgments set down are, most of them, those of a thirteenth century monk. The prose is fragile, almost finical. But the imaginative sympathy of the writer with the subject is so complete that his book is preserved from any taint of *pastiche*. So the world seemed, one says to oneself, when it was younger. So men saw and felt and reasoned in the age of faith. And in return for the loving comprehension he has given it, that age has thrown its austere and peaceful beauty over Mr. Bolitho's pages. In them we may find again for a moment something we once valued but have long since lost.

## The World in a Nutshell

AN OUTLINE OF THE UNIVERSE. By J. G. CROWTHER. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1931. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JOHN H. BRADLEY, JR.

IN a prefatory note the author states his belief that scientific journalism is a new craft "at present practised mainly by scientists wishing to increase their pocket money or too elderly to have sufficient energy for research." On the next page he acknowledges the books of A. S. Eddington, J. B. S. Haldane, A. V. Hill, J. S. Huxley, J. H. Jeans, T. H. Morgan, C. K. Ogden, H. N. Russell, G. E. Smith, G. P. Wells, H. G. Wells, and others. Since this list includes some of the chief practitioners of scientific journalism who are also professional scientists, it would be interesting to know which ones Mr. Crowther thinks are writing for pin money and which ones are too old to do research.

The myth that scientists are congenitally unable to express themselves in the mother tongue persists in the face of repeated proof to the contrary. Mr. Crowther believes that when scientists write about science "their work usually suffers in the first instance from defects in style due to the character of their motive and in the second from the mental deconcentration which affects those within sight of the grave." He attempts to correct these deficiencies, to write a book on the universe that will convey not only the facts but the mental attitude of the men who discover them, a book neither motivated by hope of gain nor vitiated by old age.

After such a smug announcement the reader naturally looks for faults—and finds them. "Accuracy of atmosphere" is extolled as the chief desideratum for books of this genre, but in several places Mr. Crowther's book contains positive statements which are sometimes misleading, occasionally false, and always out of harmony with the skeptical tone of the truly scientific utterance. In chapter 9, for example, the theoretical concepts in the "Jeans theory" of the origin of the solar system are stated with irritating dogmatism. Furthermore, tidal disruption of the sun by a passing star is the cornerstone of the theory. It was taken bodily from the planetesimal hypothesis of Chamberlin and Moulton, yet the mother hypothesis is not mentioned in this connection, nor fully credited at any other point in the discussion.

Again, in chapter 12, there is a badly confused account of the density sequence in the earth, coupled with the statement that "material coming up from the depths in volcanic eruptions is always basalt." If this were true, half the fun of being a

petrographer would disappear. Perhaps no man can be intimate with all the material that must be reviewed and condensed for a book of this sort. Other errors of fact could be cited, but it would be unfair to emphasize them when so much of the book is ably and accurately written.

Mr. Crowther expresses the need for an impersonal scientific journalism, but if there is a reader ingenuous enough to hope for an impersonal account of anything, he is headed for disappointment here. The author admits in the preface that "this book contains an outline of what the word [universe] means to me." Judging by the allotment of space—eleven chapters to astronomy, one to geology, thirteen to physics and chemistry, twenty-nine to the properties of living matter—the universe would seem to mean for this author what it has always meant for most men: a vast background for the antics of protoplasm, chiefly the human variety. If a truly impersonal book is ever written it will probably employ symbols rather than words; it will deal little with the rare accident of life; it will contain no assumptions and no conclusions; it will be so dull to the egocentric minds of men that few if any will care to read it.

This book is enjoyable chiefly because it is not impersonal. Mr. Crowther has selected those facts and theories that appeal to his imagination, and has made of them a universe—his universe. He has presented not only an exposition of some of the most challenging concepts of ultra-modern scientific thought, but an intelligent coordination of the concepts. He has thought about his universe, and his thought is stimulating and enlightening. It is unfortunate that complacency mars this otherwise excellent outline.



## A Small Reservation\*

By ELINOR WYLIE

Being a letter from the young Brots traveler, Peregrine Miles, to his father, Thomas Oliver Miles, the historian.

American Agency,  
Pontefract, Conn.  
7th September, 2228.

Dear Father:

You will see by the heading of this letter that I've broken my flight in Leninia. After the magnificence of the Argentine and the enchanting tranquility of China it's a depressing change, but Li Quong inveigled me into a California week-end, and I decided to cross the continent rather than the isthmus on my way home. So, instead of a Panama helmet, you shall have a slight record of a vanishing race for your notebook.

I am staying with my friend Igor Nicolai Alexandrov, the head of the American Agency here. He is an amusing, kind-hearted creature, and has urged me to remain until I am bored, which is pretty sure to happen at the end of a week of this. But as you stuffed me with sociology at an age when most children are content with saccaplums and glucose toffee, I have a certain curiosity to see what these people are really like.

This is sometimes known as the Northern Agency, to distinguish it from the Virginian one; there is a third near Lake Michigan, but that is really a penal colony. Kolya is amazingly good to these poor devils, and their condition is comfortable and even prosperous in a material sense, though of course the whole scene is frantically depressing. It's a rotten dull job for him, and I don't see how he stands it. He has a lot of idealistic notions about educating them and so forth, and at present he intends to devote his life to this excellent work, a project of which Ranya by no means approves. By

\*The following, recently found among the papers of the late Elinor Wylie and written in her most Butlerian vein, looks forward to the time when all America may be embraced in a larger scheme of things and the New Englander as much a Vanishing Race as the noble Redskin.

the way, she'll be in London next Friday to buy gloves, and I've told her to look you up and make you give her some tea. Tell Mother not to be shocked by her little opium pipe; it's much better than a Russian cigarette.

They have quite a decent house here, and the country is very pretty, but the whole atmosphere of the place is one of ruin and decay; I can't describe it, but it's in the air, like the smell of burning leaves. The Americans—they are mostly of the New England tribes—are rather a handsome race, and some of the girls quite lovely, but they seem to have lost all interest in life. The women look very picturesque in their native costumes; they still wear skirts, you know, and a few of them have long hair, which seems very odd indeed, and reminds one of Bluebeard's wives and Lady Godiva. They are most of them fair—a few brown or hazel eyes—but the complexion is usually freckled or rosy, and the hair somewhere between flaxen and chestnut. I have been amusing myself by tracing distinct types of Brots and Scirish faces among them, which is interesting after six hundred years. They still use the old terms; English, Pict, Scots, and Eirish, and all that sort of romantic phraseology; its very strange to hear it nowadays.

I find it perfectly easy to understand them, and their alphabet is precisely the same as ours. A lot of them still write in longhand, which went out with the longbow in Europe, didn't it? Of course Russian is compulsory at the Agency school, but Kolya finds it impossible to make them speak it among themselves, and as he is extremely broadminded they are allowed to stick to their old-fashioned Brots dialect. They may build their own houses of what material they choose, and Kolya says they are extraordinarily stubborn about using antiquated brick and wood instead of the aerated cement that is so much cleaner and cheaper. The old men even insist upon wearing woolen coats—filthy idea—and this in spite of the fact that the Soviet provides them with splendid paper and cellulocotton jerkins.

It's these old men who make the most painful impression on me, somehow; the young people get a certain amount of fun out of their little tinpot Ford planes, rattling under the clouds to a cinema in the county town of Boston, and after all they can emigrate to Morocco or Paraguay, where they've established colonies. But the old men are rather tragic. Their wives—they still call them wives, in spite of Kolya's best efforts—have their sons and daughters to bring up, and their queer native messes to cook, and all that, and the middle-aged men are kept fairly busy over the maize and tobacco crops and the cider-making. The old men sit in a row, these fine autumn evenings, in front of the Agency "Store" as it is called, smoking or chewing tobacco, which is almost the only narcotic they use. I've talked with several of them, and I suppose our conversations may have a certain historical value, even though they can have no human interest except for a philanthropist such as you. The most intelligent of the lot—an old chap called Emerson Pierce—has favored me with a few acid remarks upon life in general, and the condition of the American native in particular, but their commonest monosyllable is a grunt, and when one of them says "mebbe" (maybe) he feels he is dangerously committed.

Emerson and his cousin, Seward Curtis, can both remember the days of the great massacres; in fact Sew lost a leg in the last of the fighting, though he was only fourteen at the time. They admit now that they were extremely foolish and wrongheaded, or at least one supposes they admit it by the philosophic tone of their grunts. Another old fellow called Lincoln Brown—named after their great Consul Lincoln, you know—who is a comparative chatterbox, tells me that I would have done far better to go to the Virginian Agency, where there is very good talk, as well as excellent spirits distilled from maize and rye. "Always wished I'd gone to Paris, myself, instead of being herded in here like so many head of cattle." This is Lincoln's view of the situation. He calls the neighboring



state the Commonweal of Massachusetts, and indeed it is a melancholy landscape enough, with the crumbling ruins of boot factories facing the cold blue of the Atlantic. This is a milder country, the rolling hills now very beautiful in their first gilding of frost. Pontefract is upon the borders of the two states, near the town of Puttenham, named I think for one of the generals of the American Civil War. I am told that the winter climate is severe, but certainly its September is a pleasant season, and smells and tastes like a good apple.

I hesitate to ask any of these strange creatures to confess the true inwardness of his thoughts, but surely there must be a dreadful sense of exile and defeat at the back of their silence. It is a spiritual exile, of course, for these are the very fields and villages where they were born, but how little they dreamed, as children, that time would dispossess them as it has done! Do not think me sentimental if I admit that I am sorry for them. They are a vanishing race, and I suppose they are an inferior race; certainly they seem very dull and taciturn compared to Kolya and his clever friends. Perhaps all conquered peoples sink into this sombre lethargy. I remembered noticing the same look on certain faces the first time I flew across Siberia.

Lincoln, who rather fancies himself in your line, has a lot of theories about history and fate, and poetic justice, and divine irony, and the swing of the cosmic pendulum. He says that his ancestors were Transcendentalists and Abolitionists, and that such a fact explains the Soviet Government to his entire satisfaction. He is tremendously up on the whole story; the Klan and Gunmen wars, the Legion ructions, and that amazing business of the Little Theatres League and the smuggled nitroglycerine capsules. He ragged me a bit about Brothland and Japan, and asked me if we weren't rather sorry now that we'd let Russia quietly annex the whole of North America while we were translating the Anthology into Hokku form. I daresay we are, but as a Brot I wouldn't admit it.

If it is true, as Kolya tells me, that there are now about half a million native Americans surviving in the three great reservations, with perhaps another half million scattered about at various agencies throughout the south and west and on the Atlantic coast, then their race is reduced to no more than a hundredth part of its original greatness, and those survivors are, in their present state, a subject people and hardly better than slaves. But no; that is not wholly true, because of those many million only a minority was of the original stock, and of that minority many have escaped to the South American colonies and even to the countries of Europe. Those that remain are sprung from obstinate and stupid fathers who prolonged a bloody conflict without hope of victory, and their deplorable condition is but the result of their own ignorance and folly. Yet, as I said before, I am sorry for them. At the same time Kolya is a delightful fellow, and they are most fortunate in being under his care instead of at the mercy of the common run of government officials.

Lincoln tells me to read the history of the Indian wars; he doesn't mean the Mutiny, you know, but the scraps with the Sioux and the Comanches in America. I must stop calling it America, or Kolya will be very cross; Leninia, I mean. But then it's been Leninia less than a hundred years, and the other has the grace of a legend already. "Old, unhappy, far-off things"; sitting in a row in front of the Agency Store, while Kolya plays brilliantly upon the balalaika.

I hope I haven't bored you; I'm not often so serious. I suppose I'll be home by the end of next week; I shall hop off early and do it in a day, so tell mother I'll be frightfully hungry. I've promised to take rather a pretty girl to a flick in Boston; Loël, her name is, and she says she's descended from a family of troubadours.

Love and Luck,

PEREGRINE.

## The BOWLING GREEN

### The Silver Season

ORD, I do discover a Fallacy, whereby I have long deceived myself. Which is this: I have desired to begin my Amendment, from my Birthday, or from the first day of the Year, or from some Eminent Festival, that so my Repentance might bear some remarkable date. But when those days were come, I have adjourned my Amendment to some other Time. I am resolved thus to befool myself no longer. Today is the Golden Opportunity, tomorrow will be the Silver Season, next day, but the Brazen one, and so long, till at last I shall come to the Toes of Clay, and be turned to dust. And if this day be obscure in the Kalendar, and remarkable in itself for nothing else, give me to make it memorable in my soul.—Thomas Fuller, *Good Thoughts in Bad Times* (1645)

#### THE CAR "TRIVIA"

Aboard *The Wolverine*, Dec 12

SIR.—Do you remember the chair-car *Trivia* that used to make sporadic appearances in the Green during the old Post days? She is at this moment slipping along as 5th car in the procession of Pullmans in which I am returning East from a week's work in Grand Rapids—where, incidentally, they sell the *Sat. Review*.

I used to see *Trivia* once in a while back in those old days when she was on the Springfield, Mass.—New York run. Then she was very ordinary in green plush. Now she is discreet in a sort of blue-grey. The only occupants of that elegance as I came through on my way to the diner were her porter—round, like an overgrown huckleberry—and the Pullman conductor. I made tactful inquiries of them and learned that she is on the Detroit-Buffalo (or maybe Chicago-Buffalo) run; has been, off and on, for a year or so. It occurs to me that we should organize a guild of Pearsall Smith admirers to provide her with copies of her namesake book, delicately chained to every chair.

Some time I will tell you about the young lady who teaches ballet to fat women so she can get back to live and dance in Paris. Likewise about the young gal whom I found on the road to Worse Than Death as a reader of Richard Halliburton. I put her straight by buying the town's one copy of *A Shropshire Lad* and left the rest to God. B. L.

For the year 1932 the Bowling Green plans a long—and perhaps occasionally disconcerting—feature which will not be in the least literary. Therefore I want to clear the decks by unloading today a number of literary items that have been collecting in my mind.

Ed. H. was a trainman out of work, about 60, riding the P. R. R. from Philly to N. Y. He had come from Mauch Chunk, but smelled very strong of disinfectant after a night en route in the Lodging for Friendless Men at 18th and Hamilton Streets, Philadelphia. He smokes Granger, but was out of it and borrowed a pipeful of Serene. He had a letter of commendation from a former Governor of New Jersey; he had once worked in Hoboken and was surprised to find my knowledge of that town fairly complete. He said he was an old printer, and when he alluded to the composing-room legend about type-lice I felt it was worth a dollar. He was on his way to a flop-house run by a pal of his on the East Side. More than anything he was upset by the fact he had lost his spectacles and couldn't read properly. "I'm careful about reading," he said. "I know where to stop, I always stop at a period."

The Spanish for talking pictures, I gather from a movie house on upper Fifth Avenue, is *Sonoros Pellicules*.

On Upper Broadway the lights are too bright for Orion to be seen; but by going over to Amsterdam Avenue you can see it perfectly.

Certainly one of the most interesting bookshops in New York is that of B. Westermann on West 46th Street. What is too rare among booksellers it assumes intelligence among its clients.



JOHN F. CROTTY  
VETERAN BOOKSELLER IN LANSING, MICHIGAN.  
(See page 416.)

It is extraordinary, I reflected, reaching p. 264 of *The Sacred Fount* after three weeks of patient persecution, that a man who could write as well as Henry James should so rarely have wished to do so.

"I should like to see him get the full measure of recognition that is due him while he is here and can enjoy it," writes one poet of another. "He'll get it anyhow, but I don't want him to have to wait until he is dead to garner it in. I don't think things can mean quite the same to you after you are dead."

O. H. P. remembers having watched with amusement a gentleman at a Bleecker Street tavern, years ago, who was exhilarated with the grape and insistently sociable with all and sundry. Finally he had to be quelled, but when led back to his seat he rose from it for one final gust of self-expression. Seizing a moment's hush he struck an attitude with hand on breast and cried out the phrase that the spectators have never forgotten and attribute to some obscure classic:

"Oh Virtue, when expelled from other habitations make this thy domicile."

Thereafter he sank into silence and History has nought else to report.

Vachel Lindsay believed in poetry as something actual, a form of spiritual tender justly exchangeable for roof and fire and meat.

I had as much pleasure and excitement in discovering Mr. Cozzens's *S. S. San Pedro* as I did in first reading Conrad. I do not say that the one artist is as great as the other, for such comparisons are unmannerly and meaningless; but the quality of the pleasure was much the same for me in both cases.

The first time I met H. M. Tomlinson (in 1924) we were at adjoining basins in a London washroom, cleaning our hands. A fanciful person might have imagined that one can sometimes rinse away the dust and soot of daily jargon and ex-

change clean Idea. At any rate the first thing he said was: "Why are all your critics always complaining that you don't have enough literature? You've had Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson. Isn't that enough for 75 years or so?"

Walter de la Mare once lectured, very quietly, at the Town Hall. He said "A work of art is a prepared, proportioned, selected illusion of life." Speaking of writers on the supernatural, he said: "The sole test we impose on artists is that of our own nerves. A novelist's ghost is a sure index to his powers." This encourages one about Henry James.

A British Field Marshal, when asked if the Cross-Channel patrol during the War was efficient, replied: "I was able to leave the War office about 1 P. M., and be at G. H. Q. in France in time for tea."

A Scottish private in Cologne at Christmas 1918 was overheard (by C. E. Montague) to say to a downhearted German burgher: "Och, dinna tak' it to hairrt, mon. I tell ye, your lads were grrrand."

Our old friend Will H. Low, the painter, has brushed in gold on the door of his studio in Bronxville—in graceful facsimile of Stevenson's handwriting, which he knew so well—these lines by R. L. S.:

*This is the study where a smiling God  
Beholds each day my stage of labor trod,  
And smiles and praises, and I hear him  
say  
The day is brief; be diligent in play.*

To recognize fine things whether old or new is always desirable; to recognize them before they are universally acclaimed is the most agreeable and selfish refinement of pleasure. We have not yet heard of an art collection in the East that owns any of the paintings of Grant Wood of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who interests us as much as any living painter. His work, though we have seen it only in photograph, has made 1931 a more exciting year.

They were bringing heavy little canvas sacks into the lobby of the Prune Exchange Bank, dumping them down on a small truck. A guard with a revolver, deceptively nonchalant, stood outside the revolving door. I suppose my eye may have dwelt upon the scene with unconscious admiration as I stood in line at the window. "Not much there, only nickels and dimes," said the teller consolingly.

On the outer wall of the Panhellenic Hotel on East 49th Street is a Greek alphabet as decoration; but I think they have put the letters Kappa and Iota in the wrong order.

Another matter that interested The Bowling Green was the origin of the poetic sounding name Lagonda for a make of motor car which is deservedly very popular in Britain. Lagonda Distributors, Ltd., of London, write to us:

In the course of an inquiry into the origin of the name Lagonda we found that this name was given to the Company by an American, the late Mr. Wilbur Gunn, its original founder. He came to this country towards the end of the last century, and in reversal of the normal process married an English heiress, and opened a factory at Staines.

It is said that he gave to his product, which was then a motor bicycle, the name of his home in America—Lagonda.

Is anyone familiar with the name? Is it a place?

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Ernst Toller, collaborating with Hermann Kesten, has produced his new five-act drama at one of the most distinguished theatres left in Republican Germany, the National Theatre at Mannheim. The title is "Wunder in Amerika" (Miracle in America), and the heroine is Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, and already the subject of critical biographical study in German.