

from THE INNER SANCTUM of
SIMON and SCHUSTER
Publishers, 386 Fourth Avenue, New York

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111 One of *The Inner Sanctum's* favorite literary emporia is *The Beacon Book Shop*, located on the 45th Street side of The Roosevelt Hotel. Whenever a new publication has that mysterious x-quality that publishers spend week-ends discussing, *The Beacon Book Shop* is among the first to discover it.

111 MISS GABRIELLA PLACHT who presides over the *Beacon's* destinies was one of the first discoverers of *Hard Lines*. She sent a copy to Dr. S. B. Ross, who, though the house doctor of The Roosevelt was nevertheless not immune to a cold. In response, Miss PLACHT received this letter from Dr. Ross:

"MY DEAR MISS PLACHT:
"I got half way through *Hard Lines* when I felt better, dressed and came down to the office. I want you to arrange with the publishers to have all the copies sent to me and the plates, too, at wholesale rates, for I intend to destroy the whole outfit. Nash's book is prejudicial to doctors. One look, one gasp, a laugh, and the patient's cured. God knows, it's hard enough for a doctor to make a living without such unkind competition.
"Gratefully,
"S. B. Ross."

111 Here at *The Inner Sanctum* we have heard of movie rights, reprint rights, serial and syndication rights, but medical rights is a new one on us. The Statistics Department is planning to go into a huddle with the good doctor. Perhaps he will make a deal on the fifth printing which is now on press.

—ESSANDESS

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by HERMAN MELVILLE
(Illustrated)

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AT ALL BOOKSTORES

The Twilight of Christianity

By Harry Elmer Barnes

"The orthodox religious complex is the most active and pervasive menace to civilization today," says the author. His book is a summary of the development of religious thought and a challenge to its place in the modern world.

Harold J. Laski in *The Saturday Review of Literature* says, "Any plain man who, with an open mind, desires an examination of the religious issue . . . could not do better than begin with this volume."

At all booksellers, \$3.00

Richard R. Smith, Inc., New York



WE see that Fairfax Downey has written a biography of that famous Richard Burton who translated the Arabian Nights and was one of the great adventurers of the world. It is a book on Scribner's spring list. Also on their list is a volume by the author of "Her Privates We," namely "Scenes and Portraits," by Frederic Manning. This is a group of re-creations of famous figures of past history, and it gave Colonel T. E. Lawrence the clue to the identity of "Private 19022" who originally signed "Her Privates We."

Some little time ago in the first of his Enemy Pamphlets Mr. Wyndham Lewis made a great uproar praising and defending his own satire, "The Apes of God." The book sounds as though it were a good take-off on Bloomsbury and Chelsea except that in satirizing the Sitwells Mr. Lewis is dealing with real and not mock artists, which he does not appear to recognize. Edith Sitwell is one of the most considerable women poets of the day and Osbert Sitwell a distinguished prose-writer, while in at least one volume of poems, "England Reclaimed," he made a permanent contribution to English literature. Sacheverell Sitwell has also demonstrated his indubitable talents. Mr. Wyndham Lewis is a very clever writer with much power, but we don't like him particularly when he ballyhoos his own work. There is too much ego in his cosmos. Naturally one of the best letters written to him came from W. B. Yeats. (Wyndham Lewis has printed a lot of them, conserving all the laudation possible.) Yeats says in part, in re satire:

Somebody tells me that you have satirized Edith Sitwell. If that is so, visionary excitement has in part benumbed your senses. When I read her "Gold Coast Customs" a year ago, I felt, as on first reading "The Apes of God," that something absent from all literature for a generation was back again, and in a form rare in the literature of all generations, passion ennobled by intensity, by endurance, by wisdom. We had it in one man once. He lies in St. Patrick's now under the greatest epitaph in history.

We wish to thank Wilfred J. Funk for sending us his book of amusing verses, "Manhattans, Bronxes, and Queens," illustrated by Russell Patterson and published by Robert M. McBride.

We think we really should have turned over the following letter from Kenneth Slade Alling, which we have held for some time, to the writer of "Round about Parnassus" in another part of this journal. But as the letter begins "Dear Phoenician" we are printing it here. We do not agree with Mr. Alling because we are all for innovations in the sonnet. The only test of their worth is whether or not they do what they set out to do.

It is almost a churlish thing to react adversely to as fine a sonnet as Absolution by Arthur Davison Ficke in your issue of Dec. 20.

The reason? Let us assume for a stretched comparison that a man is an animal painter—we will say the best there is—and that he paints the massive forequarters of a lion with the mane like tawny fire—he is part way through with his project—and then to this uncompleted lion he adds the hindquarters of a tiger. Now like the lion's portion, the fragment of tiger may also be consummate painting, each in itself incapable of being bettered—but can these halves be joined?

I doubt if I am more finical than any other intensely interested reader of poetry, but to me the Shakespearean octave that has for its completion a Petrarchian sestet—is—well, much like the animal picture above.

To vary it—when I read what sets out to be a Shakespearean sonnet, my ear expects for completion a certain cadence, a movement and a chime, and then to meet with an Italian ending disappoints, for there that majestic ebbing is out of place.

If possible even worse it is to begin reading a fine sonnet on the Italian scheme and come to a couplet at the end—I can imagine no more horrid detonation.

Arthur Davison Ficke is an artist. I know his sonnets and some of them are among our best. Therefore I am the more surprised at this his lapse of artistic integrity in Absolution—which—considered only in its components is a splendid sonnet.

There is no answer at all in advancing a sonnet by Wordsworth in which he has more or less similarly sinned—some seven of his sonnets are stupendous and unequalled—any more than you can set up a certain fifteen line sonnet of

Shakespeare's and conclude from this that fourteen lines in a sonnet are entirely inadequate.

How about this, Phoenician? How about a war against sonnetal monstrosities?

Wolcott Gibbs's "Bird Life at the Pole," published by William Morrow and supposed to be told to Gibbs by Commander Christopher Robin, is a parody of polar expeditions in general. All correspondence concerning this expedition has been written on bits of cloth snipped from the wings of aeroplanes in which Commander Robin did not discover the South Pole. He reached the North Pole by accident instead. A Junior League girl from Columbus, Ohio, who accompanied the expedition was, unfortunately, (or fortunately—it all depends on how you look at it!) swallowed by a whale. No further statement is being made by Commander Robin concerning the Penguin scandal at this time. Commander Robin's slogan has been "Birds gotta fly."

Vrest Orton, at one time connected with this journal and formerly head of the Tory Press, has now established at Brattleboro, Vermont (he is a native Vermonter) in affiliation with the Vermont Printing Company, a publishing and fine book printing organization to be known as the Stephan Daye Press. The name is taken from Stephen Daye who set up the first printing establishment in what is now the United States. That was in 1638.

We see that Duffield and Company are bringing out the fourteenth edition of Robert W. Wood's "How to Tell the Birds from the Flowers," a book whose acquaintance we originally made in San Francisco in the year of 1908 or thereabout. It is one of the most amusing books in the world, one that deserves to be ever discovered anew by each new generation. Its conception was a positive inspiration, you can look it through in almost no time, and it only costs a dollar.

Which reminds us of another inspired bit of fooling, a book of drawings with rhymes by one "Childe Harold," published, we think, by Paul Elder of San Francisco years ago. The real author was, of course, Edward Salisbury Field. And then there was Wallace Orwin's "Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum," and that collection of collegiate romances and ballads, "Poe's Run and other Poems," by McCreedy Sykes, celebrating among other things the whole string of single-handed—and footed—Poe victories for Princeton over Yale. And then there used to be a Putnam at Yale once who signed himself "T. Put" and got out a little pamphlet of his drawings and verses about fat little animals with fat little clouds in the offing. The lyric of his that still chimes down the halls of memory is

This is the picture of a calf.
I hope that it will make you laff.
It is not funny—O dear no!—
But it is sort of foolish though.
Yes? No?

It is such brochures that considerably lighten such labors as are shown forth by a cartoon of John McCutcheon's kindly sent us by a correspondent. It is a fearsome picture and is entitled "The Man who Tried to Keep up with the New Books."

J. B. Priestley has just arrived in this country. Before leaving England he completed with the addition of some finishing touches by Edward Knoblock a dramatization of "The Good Companions." Of it he says: "It is often said that a good play cannot be made out of a novel but I feel that the collaboration of an accomplished playwright and a novelist should result in a play better than the average. I go to the theatre a good deal, and am rarely satisfied because so often the characters in modern plays are thin shadows that have no existence off the stage. Now, a novelist's business is the creation of character in the round, and he can be a valuable help to a dramatist who had to spend much of his time learning the intricate technique of his job. Novel-writing is, of course, far easier than playwrighting."

Thank you for a lovely time!

THE PHOENICIAN.

The AMEN CORNER

We have lately been dazzled with the newspaper accounts of the great International Exhibition of Persian Art, which is being held at the Royal Academy in London. The King of England, the Shah of Persia, the Egyptian Government, and the Soviet Government have combined with many private owners to contribute to its unparalleled (so they say) magnificence and variety. The chairman is Sir Arnold Wilson, who has many claims to fame, not the least of which is that he has written a book which, as the *New York Herald Tribune* says, "is certainly one among the few genuinely great and lasting books of the war"—*Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914-1917. A Personal and Historical Record*.¹ He has also written a remarkable book called *The Persian Gulf*,² an historical sketch from the earliest times to the Twentieth Century, and a still more remarkable *Bibliography of Persia*,³ which lists, as far as possible, every book and article ever written in any language on anything connected with Persia! If you want to make a real study of Persia, this is a book to have by you.

But in a world where life is short and books long, we have chosen to acquire our own introduction to that romantic country through a fascinating little book by Sir E. Denison Ross, the famous Orientalist, called, *The Persians*. It is a companion volume (though slenderer) to *The Sumerians* by C. Leonard Woolley, and even more interesting. The book is, first, a survey of Persian history from the 6th century B. C. to the present day; secondly, a series of journeys "on paper" along the chief highways of Persia, with descriptions of the cities passed and the monuments seen; thirdly, a series of short sections on the various departments of Persian art—architecture, ceramics, carpets, painting—and a chapter on Persian literature. There are eighteen beautiful plates, some of them photographs of actual Persian scenes, others reproductions from Persian manuscripts.

The finest example of these wonderful manuscripts known in Western Europe is, we are told, an early 15th century manuscript belonging to the Royal Asiatic Society in London, of *The Shah-Namah of Firdausi*. The *Shah-Namah* is the great heroic classic of Persia, the book of the Persian Kings, in which are brought together the epic tales of the mythological past of Persia. The Oxonian has been looking at a book⁴ which the Oxford University Press has just published about this manuscript which contains a series of miniature paintings surpassing, for richness of imagination and distinction of manner, anything we have lately viewed. 24 of these are reproduced, 7 in four colors and gold, and 17 in half tone. A commentary and description is provided by Mr. J. V. S. Wilkinson of the British Museum, and Laurence Binyon has written the Introduction. The Oxonian, who has lingered a good deal over Matthew Arnold, turned at once to "The Seven Courses of Rustam" and "The Story of Suhrab." They are, as you will have guessed, our old friends, Sohrab and Rustam.⁵ From the *Shah-Namah* we learn the prelude to the story as told by Arnold. One of the most beautiful plates in a beautiful volume is the reproduction of The Meeting between Tahminah and Rustam. In color, in composition, and in feeling it is a real masterpiece. Sir E. Denison Ross refers constantly to the *Shah-Namah* (and reproduces an illustration from another manuscript) in the historical portion of *The Persians* as well as in the chapter on literature.

In this field, a more extended account is *Persian Literature*⁶ by Reuben Levy. By way of illustration is *The Three Dervishes and Other Persian Tales*, in the *World's Classics*.⁷ The same series contains the celebrated *Hajji Baba of Isfahan*, 1824, and *Hajji Baba of Isfahan in England*, 1828. On the history of the country there is *Persia*⁸ by Sir Percy Sykes, a short and convenient account.

But we doubt whether you will be able to stop poring over Sir E. Denison Ross's chapter called "Journeys through Persia." If you are fortunate enough to be able to follow in his footsteps, prime yourself with *A Primer of Persian*⁹ by G. S. A. Ranking, and don't let your *Persian Grammar*¹⁰ out of your sight. And so you may fare safely from Tehran to Isfahan, from Bushire to Basra, and silken Samarkand!

THE OXONIAN.

Our Book of the Month: *The Persians*, by Sir E. Denison Ross. \$2.

(¹) \$10.00. Second volume shortly. (²) \$7.00. (³) \$7.00. (⁴) \$2.50. (⁵) \$16.00. (⁶) Matthew Arnold's Poems. Oxford Standard Authors (\$1.50). *World Classics*, 80c. (Write for complete lists, 114 Fifth Avenue, New York.) (⁷) \$1.00. *World's Manuals*. (⁸) 80c. each. (⁹) \$2.50. (¹⁰) \$1.50. (¹¹) By J. T. Platts and G. B. A. Ranking, \$7.90.