

Siegfried Looks at England

ENGLAND'S CRISIS. By ANDRÉ SIEGFRIED.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by HAROLD J. LASKI

IT is wholly unnecessary to say that, like everything that M. Siegfried writes, this book has pungency, a good deal of insight, and considerable power of skilful generalization. But, like most of M. Siegfried's other books, it suffers from his determination to reduce at all costs a great body of complex facts into a few sweeping generalizations. The result is that while a good deal of what he has to say is not only true, but most effectively said, its sins of omission are too serious to make it an adequate picture of the problems it seeks to depict.

M. Siegfried's strength lies in his power of social observation. Much of what he says, for example, of the habits of English industrial direction is at once just and courageous. His attack on its inefficiency, its nepotism, its failure widely to adjust itself to new conditions, is put with the acid sharpness M. Siegfried knows so well how to employ. For this part alone, the book is worth reading.

But there is much upon which M. Siegfried dwells where he seems to me to know less than nothing. He has swallowed wholesale the journalist's picture (is this the effect of two month's magic at All Souls?) of the English worker as morally ruined by the "dole." There is no real evidence to support that view; on the contrary, most of the material printed by the Minister of Labor is solidly on the other side. He seems to assume that the redistribution of the national wealth which has taken place since the war is proof that England is going to the dogs. There is, in fact, throughout his pages an animus against the working-class which I find unintelligible in a man so distinguished. And not less singular is his constant habit of testing the adequacy of English ways by an unconscious French standard. The Englishman's love of leisure, his regard for politics, his refusal to devalue the currency, all of these are made into a jeremiad which, for me, amounts in sum total to no more than the fact that M. Siegfried, quite naturally, would rather be a Frenchman than an Englishman. I well understand that. But a man who wants to make a serious social analysis must be aware of his own presuppositions.

I agree wholly with M. Siegfried that the economic position of England is serious; though I add that the gloom of his own portrait renders the optimistic note on which he ends without a shadow of justification. But the evidence on which he bases his thesis is curiously unsatisfactory. His statistics are not only partial, they are rarely complete, and they are not always accurate or fair; on p. 70, for instance, he says that the worker was better off in 1914 than in 1900. Professor Bowley, from whom the argument about the post-war years is taken, adopts a very different view about the earlier period. Again, M. Siegfried gives a quite wrong view about the struggle in the cotton industry; the dispute is not about the introduction of the automatic loom, but the rates to be paid for their operation. Everywhere, in fact, M. Siegfried seems to me to have selected the easy and obvious material which came to his hand. I doubt whether he talked to anyone who did not possess, if not the Curzon manner, at least the Oxford temper. There is a Trade Union Congress at Westminster; there is Sir Walter Layton, Mr. Tawney, Mr. Cole, Professor Robbins, Mr. D. H. Robertson. I do not see in his analysis any signs that he has checked his work by discussion with them.

The reality of the British crisis needs no emphasis. But I think most of the elements which are essential to recovery are not discussed by M. Siegfried at all. It is only partially a merely national crisis; not the greatest degree of internal reconstruction would enable Great Britain to recover her pre-war position. In part, I suggest, the explanation lies also in the international situation; here it would be an interesting, if delicate, inquiry whether Great Britain is in fact as prejudiced as America. The truth is that no nation living by its exports can possibly weather the storm of economic nationalism through which we are passing. In part, also, though M. Siegfried does not allude to this, we are witnessing a decay of the foundations of capitalism the significance of which cannot be exaggerated. On capitalist assumptions, of course, the easy road for Great Britain is to reduce the level of wages, but capitalist assumptions are losing their hold on Great Britain. Here, and in the international aspect, are the two great

sources of British difficulty. To me, at least, M. Siegfried does not deal adequately with either.

It was once said by the great historian Maitland that the demand for simplicity has played havoc with political philosophy. The same seems to me true of that social economic world in which M. Siegfried dwells. Just as he painted an America false because there are at least half a dozen Americans he did not paint, so the England he sees is a very partial glimpse of a much more intricate reality. The reader who wants to understand the problem must still go to Dibelius for its essential exposition. The portrait is, perhaps, less brilliant; but it has about it the solid air of unmistakable veracity.

Music in the United States

OUR AMERICAN MUSIC. By JOHN TASKER HOWARD. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. 1931. \$6.

Reviewed by CARL ENGEL

HOW often, in the past, has it not foolishly been said that America, meaning these United States, had no music of its own? We have learned to know better. If any doubting Thomases are left, let them read and ponder Mr. John Tasker Howard's "Our American Music." It represents an enormous labor, clearly accomplished with love. It affords a panoramic view crowded with incidents and figures.

When the learned Briton, Henry Davey, wrote his detailed "History of English Music," he set off with the categorical statement that "The art of musical composition is an English invention"—referring, of course, to John Dunstable and his first works, written about the year 1400, which raised music to the rank of a structural art. Mr. Davey covered more than five centuries of English music, and covered them quite adequately, in a little less than five hundred pages. Mr. Howard needs a little more than seven hundred pages to tell us about the three hundred years of American music. And even so the author admits that his account may be found "incomplete in many respects." Yet he goes at his task bravely, beginning at the beginning, with the early settlers of New England and their dreary psalmody; and he leads the plodding reader abreast with the vanguard of our native or imported modernists, takes him right up to the jazz-hounds of our own giddy day of depression and the russo-ebreo denizens of tin-pan alley.

Mr. Howard's bulky compilation will be found useful by many. In style it wavers alternately between the flow of an alluring narrative and the forbidding dryness of a biographical dictionary. It abounds in handy references. It is a library tool and a class book. Not the least valuable part of it consists in an attempt at furnishing a bibliography of what has been written—in English—on American music and music in America. Though patently not exhaustive, this long and elaborate list gives a good idea of the amount of books and magazine articles relating to the subject. It is a truly impressive array. And it explains, in a measure, why the author found it necessary to grow so luxuriant.

In acknowledging, as regards America's early musical history, his indebtedness to the basic researches of the late O. G. Sonneck, Mr. Howard pays but just and handsome tribute to a peerless pioneer. When the author comes to the early part of the eighteenth century, he strides out more independently. Here he explored, with profit, records hitherto not sufficiently probed. It is natural and pardonable that the zest of walking untrodden paths has sometimes led Mr. Howard into rambles along by-lanes which do not always seem as secure as they are inviting.

Mr. Howard often discusses some phase of American music or some particular musician with thoughtful and sympathetic consideration. He occasionally draws thumbnail sketches full of life. He has at heart what is called "the case of the American composer," that is, especially the contemporary composer. Yet here the book unfortunately, though perhaps unavoidably—because of a disproportionate expansiveness in other places—degenerates into a sort of perfunctory catalogue. The author was obviously at pains to omit or slight no one. Nevertheless, the very heaping of name upon name in a grand and final spurt, gives the effect of a bewildering musical plethora. And we are brought to the realization that the American composers—even though, unlike their British cousins, they cannot claim to have invented musical composition—are developing in sufficient

number and excellence to raise strong hopes that from among them will emerge our American Byrd, our Morley, and Purcell.

Real and Unreal

DEATH OF SIMON. By BORIS SOKOLOFF.
New York: Logos Publishing Co. 1931.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

BORIS SOKOLOFF is a Russian biologist who also writes. His "Crime of Dr. Garine," a collection of short stories, appeared a few years ago while he was associated with the Rockefeller Institute in New York. Before coming to this country, he had been a member of the Institute of Science in St. Petersburg and had had experience as an experimental biologist. To his experiments in fiction, therefore, he brings a scientific point of view and a knowledge esoteric to the average reader or writer.

This curious knowledge, and the cold, analytic gaze which accompanies it, inevitably intrigues. I am not sure that they do not make Mr. Sokoloff's work seem more profound than it really is—not certain, that is to say, just how much the reader's tendency to read into his narrative significances beyond those of the everyday novel is based on the actual presence of such significance and how much it may be explained by the author's peculiarities of style and his somewhat obscure manner of telling his story.

His purpose, as I understand it, in "Death of Simon" is to make a study, in fictional form, of a certain type of divided personality, of a man suffering from a disturbance of the endocrine glands. In Dr. Simon, the thyroid and suprarenal glands are functioning abnormally. He is extremely sensitive, nervous, emotional; acutely impressionable, and seems to see, in visions, what has been stamped on his subconscious mind. In actual life, he inclines to avoid the crowd and the commoner emotions, and to lose himself in an austere world, peopled with flowers, the chiming of church bells, and beautiful dreams. He is of the type of the religious visionary. To remain in this more or less dream world, he inclines to suppress sex and the more earthy instincts, a suppression which only heightens the sensitiveness of the other side of his personality.

In the story he commits a murder—as the law conventionally interprets the facts of the victim's death—and part of the author's purpose is to show that the supposed criminal in such a case may be morally guiltless; that he should be cured rather than punished. There are, moreover, two women, who embody what might be called Dr. Simon's notion of "sacred" and "profane" love. I find Mr. Sokoloff's handling of these two women a little difficult to follow, but as I understand the story, Dr. Simon's final discovery of a safe harbor in Gertrude's arms is intended to show the return of his tortured personality to a normal balance; to a humanity which recognizes and accepts the so-called "basal" instincts, understands, and forgives. Dr. Simon's "death," as I understand it, is the death of that overwrought and unbalanced personality which he had cultivated during the earlier years of his life.

There is a suggestion of Dostoevsky in Mr. Sokoloff's work—not in manner or in narrative skill—but in the type of human being considered. What Mr. Sokoloff does, in effect, is to take such a character as Dostoevsky might have written about and endeavor to analyze it, in fictional form, from the modern biologist's point of view. His story is not altogether easy to read—the narrative jumps about, this way and that, is full of curious elisions. But it is, nevertheless, peculiarly interesting, and becomes the more so on second reading.

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Disciplined Reason

REASON AND NATURE. By MORRIS R. COHEN. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1931. \$5.

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. SHELDON
Yale University

THOSE who try to follow the latest developments in science, the newest ideas in morals, the changing conceptions of religion, have their work cut out for them today. The elder vainly long for the clear science and fixed morality of fifty years ago, the younger too eagerly swallow the nostrum of one school or another. The great need is for the trained judgment which accepts no new panaceas and advocates no return to the old but sifts, discriminates, finds the old principle in the new and adjusts it better. This need—such is Professor Cohen's message—is to be met only by the cultivated reason, disciplined in science, logic, and philosophy. It is to this disciplined reason that we owe our civilization: the reason that seeks knowledge for its own sake.

What gives the book its special importance and distinction is the author's way of treating reason, and applying his treatment to current questions in religion, science, art, politics, ethics, law; for he probes deeply into all of these in this large work. Right reason is defined by the principle of polarity. This principle states that in all the great questions there are just two sides; either side alone is wrong, the true answer being that synthesis which gives fullest measure to each. A simple lesson indeed; but the application of it is at once the most difficult and most blessed thing in the world. There is no doubt that we used such a principle to correct the excesses of bad thinking, whether in a scientific materialist, a Christian sectarian, a communist, or other extreme partisan; the principle of polarity is the principle of balance and sanity. He illustrates it by the scissors which need two blades to cut; he might have referred also to the two sexes, to the nucleus and cytoplasm in the living cell, or the positive and negative electricity whose balance makes up the matter of the world. But the book is not written to set forth a system of metaphysics even if it contains hints at a system. Its purport is the proper conduct of reason; and for the most part the writer restricts himself to showing up the one-sidedness in certain current schools of philosophy and science. The reader might feel inclined to criticize the book, indeed, for its lack of decisive answer to some of the fundamental issues. But Professor Cohen has (somewhat overmodestly) disarmed the objection:

To those who labor under the necessity of passing judgment on this book in terms of current values, I suggest the following:

The author seems out of touch with everything modern and useful, and yet makes no whole-hearted plea for the old. He believes in chance and spontaneity in physics, and law and mechanism in life. He has no respect for *experience*, *induction*, *the dynamic*, *evolution*, *progress*, *behaviorism*, and *psychoanalysis*, and does not line up with either the orthodox or the revolutionary party in politics morals, or religion, though he writes on these themes.

But to the thoughtful reader I can offer as a preliminary only the expression of my profound faith in philosophy itself.

Thus the book is an admonition to the half-thinkers whose number, owing to popular education, is greater today than ever before. It teaches to these a respect for science, not based on the utility of airplanes and chemical dyes but on its conscientiousness and reasonableness. Against the undue worship of change and progress, the irrationalism of James or the intuitionism of Bergson, he points out the constancy of principles in science and morals. Against those who extol religious faith and cry down reason he reminds us that the Catholic Church has condemned Fideism. To those who declare that arguments count for little against the heart's needs, he reads the lesson of history that in the long run reason is the one thing that does count. "You cannot both distrust logic and claim logical cogency for your own (fallacious) arguments."

All this is treated with patience and care in a detailed investigation of the methods and concepts of physics, biology, mathematics, psychology, history, law, ethics. It is naturally impossible for a brief review to do justice to the vast scholarship and at the same time the logical acumen displayed in these chapters; but we cannot forbear to emphasize the rarity of the combination.

Altogether a very important work, which the philosopher will read with much pleasure and profit; and which is so well and clearly written that the layman may with but slight trouble do the same.

Saturday Review Charade Contest

WITH its present issue, the *Saturday Review* inaugurates a charade contest. Each week throughout the summer it will publish two charades by that past master of the art of riddling, Dean Le Baron Russell Briggs, and at the conclusion of that period will award a prize in accordance with the rules printed below to each of the hundred highest scores obtained by entrants in the competition.

It may, perhaps, seem hardly fitting to introduce such a contest to its prospective participants by proclaiming its ill qualities. Yet we feel that we should hardly be honest with our readers did we not state, before we set forth the matter and rules of the competition, that the charade, innocent diversion though it appear, has deadly properties. Once yielded to it, and it has you in its grasp. Into the very borderland of slumber its perplexing syllables persist, startling the sluggish mind into recurrent spasms of activity long after unconsciousness should have claimed it for its own. On mountain climbs it will not be left behind. It follows to the bath. It intrudes on reading. It silences conversation, though in the whole of its best known example it entertains company. It is teasing, and vexing, and difficult—but it is altogether irresistible. Jane Austen indulged in it, and Thackeray, in its dramatic variety, described it.

According to the authorities, this pernicious but engaging pastime was first invented by the French in the eighteenth century. It is, as the slightly condescending definition of the Ninth Edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* explains, "a trifling species of composition, or quasi-literary form of amusement, which may perhaps be best defined as a punning epigram propounded in a series of descriptions. A word is taken of two or more syllables, each forming a distinct word; each of these is described in verse or prose, as aptly or enigmatically as possible, and the same process is applied to the whole word. The neater and briefer the descriptive parts of the problem, the better the charade will be."

Of what the charade is capable at the hands of a brilliant, witty, and genial practitioner Dean Briggs has found leisure from the scholarly labors of Harvard University again and again to demonstrate. He is today the foremost writer of charades, scrupulous, ingenious, and amusing. His fancy plays lightly, and his knowledge is never at a loss for allusion or example to point his subtleties. He can be intricate, as when with a delightful pun he reveals "bittern" as the answer to what constitutes one of the longest of his charades:

When Mother Eve had just preëmpted
The record of the folks who tempted,
And when her husband did my first
(And we were consequently cursed),
Although "research" was all that Eve meant,
It ended in the world's bereavement,
Till, thirsting for illicit knowledge,
The girls left home and went to college.

Against the blue, a glistening white,
My second sails in circling flight;
In cap of black and mantle gray,
He dips an instant in the spray.
A human gull's a stupid duffer;
But man will be and do and suffer
All sorts of things to get good fishing,
In actual fact or merely wishing.
To feathered biped known as gull
Life should be anything but dull—
Unfailing fish, and (can you beat it?)
Unfailing appetite to eat it.

My whole, a glutton, takes his fill,
Nor kicks at any length of bill,
Day after day, behold him stand
In shallow water close to land.
No trivial thing his calm shall hamper,
Wet feet or any other damper;
Nor can one foot's uplifted toes
Damage his dignity of pose.
Nature would seem his life to bless;
Yet in his home's a bitterness.*

*The author hopes his ornithology
Is quite as sound as his theology,
And proffers both without apology,
(Yet conscience bids him add these words:
"He may be mixed about his birds")

or he can be simple as when he conceals "spend-thrift" in

To do my first with money or without it,
Becomes, in reckless man, a ruling passion.—
A paradox, of course, but if you doubt it,
Consider how my next is out of fashion.
My whole affects to think that gold is dross:
"A man must live: what matters gain or loss?"
Comfort is part of every man's autonomy;
Nothing so narrow-minded as economy.
Wealth is contemptible. I could not bear
The taint of being a multimillionaire."
(Yet would it seriously shock-a-feller
To find he had the means of Rockefeller?)

But in all cases Dean Briggs is entertaining and honest. We only hope that he will not prove so entirely fascinating that neglected duties will cause you to cry "A plague o' both your houses" on the *Saturday Review*, which below prints the first two charades of the contest, and the Viking Press which in September is to issue them together with others in book form.

Pegasus Perplexing



NUMBER I

My First

'Tis impedimental woe
When you do me to your toe.

My Second

Pessimists are sorely vexed
That they had to be my next.

My Whole

I apply to those who grudge
Any willingness to budge.

NUMBER II

A drummer all too dapper and a flashy little flapper
Affectionately wandered side by side.

"To be modest and industrious never made a man illustrious:

What's the use of being tempted by the fame my first preëmpted,

My second and my third for us!" he cried.

"Such toil is out of fashion; modern style is all for passion;

Those Victorians were deadly dull and slow.

What our folks will call duplicity brings adorable publicity.

They had better not exhort us; they shall never, never thwart us;

Their job is to support us. Let us go!"

CONFESSIO AUCTORIS

(Meum Totum Loquitur)

He who knows the goat and ox and has tended droves and flocks,

When my attributes he undertakes to tell,

Is less likely to be wrong than the author of this song,
Who never, "never nursed a dead gazelle"

And doesn't know the creature very well).

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 publication. 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 editors of *The Saturday Review*.