

Interregnum, by Elmer Davis, on page 830

# The Saturday Review

## of LITERATURE

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### Criticism Goes Red

WE are in for a good deal of solemn nonsense about capitalistic and communistic literature, uttered by class-conscious critics upon whose stomachs the economic interpretation of history still lies heavy and undigested. To all such (and Mr. Elmer Davis pays his respects to them in this number) a purge of music from the great period of English music is recommended. Such part songs as the English Singers and others have made familiar in concert halls and on the phonograph and the radio, their texts often long familiar on the pages of the early dramatists, have a self-confident creativeness in pure delight of sound which has no more relation to the Jacobean or Tudor economic systems than a Spring morning to market day.

Systems, economic or political, seldom inspire art of any excellence, which, indeed, is more interested in life than in the organizations of life—but they can cramp or warp it. It is not to be doubted that the era of bitter, carping naturalism out of which (it is to be hoped) we are passing, was one of the sour results of the excesses of the capitalistic spirit. The profit-making motive and its offspring, excessive competition, are responsible for our great advance in material comfort; are responsible also for the deafness, dumbness, and blindness of this age's real leaders to any form of progress that could not be made to yield a cash profit to some one. The industrialist shudders at the cruelty, licentiousness, and determined passion of a Renaissance Duke or Pope, but Medici, Sforza, or Borgia would find the industrialist incomprehensible. Why all the labor, when the man is unable to turn his profits into a recognizably good life! The late Mr. Baker would have had a respectful hearing among the Italian bankers, but what would they have said to or of him at the court of Urbino, as Castiglione not too unfaithfully describes it!

In one sense then our fiction, our drama, and a good deal of our poetry has been capitalistic, since its favorite themes have been drawn from the experiences of sensitive or high-spirited minds buffeted, suppressed, warped, or extinguished by the great profit machine that rolls backward and forward across city and country, tearing up the farms and dumping iron, steel, and bricks on the towns. We have had, in English certainly, very little direct and happy creativeness in this half century, and what there is tends to be antiquarian or fantastic like the stories of David Garnett or Robert Nathan or Thornton Wilder. The books of current life are all on the defensive, or they are documents and case histories, showing what life under our system is really like.

And what remedy does the new school of communist critics offer? Why, that we shall stop writing about Capitalism and begin to write of Communism, that we shall cease deploring or celebrating Capitalism and begin to propagandize for economic equality! What a prospect for literature! The poor artist must be either a critic or a missionary; his painting or his writing which has struggled on in a capitalistic world which does not take beauty seriously, must now be tied to another social idea, must illustrate somehow (like the recent Soviet novels) the virtues of the proletariat and the emptiness of the bourgeoisie. A plague o' both your houses!

Still, this is what we are going to be increasingly told for the next few years, and many intelligent people are going to be impressed by the importance of representing a Movement. Many worthy readers swallowed the palpable fallacy of Michael Gold's re-

### I Will Remember Rahab

By SISTER M. MADELEVA

RAHAB was a harlot and lived in Jericho;  
Neither was respectable. That was years ago.

She had no scented virtues; she told easy lies;  
Her practice was flagrant. Once two spies

Came to her door, their lives at stake;  
She took and hid them for the Lord God's sake.

They left her house; they left the town;  
The next thing she knew the walls fell down.

She hung a scarlet cord from her window ledge;  
It was her sign; it was their pledge.

She heard the trumpets; she heard the shout  
Of people in tumult, of city in rout.

The men and the women, the young and the old  
Were killed by the sword, so I am told;

But her father and her mother knew no ill  
Because of the cord at Rahab's window sill.

I remember Rahab to this day,  
And I honor her womanhood for all you say.

It called for mercy and it called for pluck;  
You wouldn't think a harlot would have such luck.

### An Outline of Life\*

By RICHARD SWANN LULL  
Yale University

WHEN three such men as the authors of a recent scientific volume get together, pool their information and writing ability, and merge their several personalities into one, the product is the result of a "combined genius" which, if for no other reason, should attract Mr. Everyman's attention in no uncertain manner. These men were especially endowed to fuse their trinity of authorship into one, for they are all, in a way, akin, either by intellectual or blood relationship. Back of all three looms the personality of Thomas Henry Huxley, perhaps the most remarkable teacher of biology our language has known; H. G. Wells was his pupil, and Julian Huxley his grandson, while G. P. Wells is the son of the former. With this remarkable relationship and inspirational source, the book can hardly fail to be great. The style is delightful and should be readily understood by Mr. Everyman, for whom it is written. Some technicalities perforce enter in, but when one is speaking of matters about which the average reader knows but little, it is necessary to use the only words which are applicable to the facts under description and hence the technical terms. To the reviewer, trained in the scientific language of biology, there are perfectly familiar; to one not so versed, these may be a little hesitation in grasping the authors' meaning. On this point, however, the reviewer is not qualified to judge, because of this very familiarity, but one does not see how the authors could have done otherwise.

The work has for its purpose a complete review of life in all its phases, from its origin to its various manifestations in mankind, physical, mental, and spiritual, with a final discussion of the biology of the human race.

In defining life, our authors stress the one exclusive characteristic, the impulse to reproduce, even in adverse circumstances, a fact at variance with the older concepts of spontaneous generation. But even here the distinction between what is living and what is not living is by no means easy, because of the utter inertness, over long periods of time, of organisms in their resting stage, out of which only the recurrence of favorable conditions will recall them to apparent life. Is there extra-terrestrial life? It is a fascinating problem which has been the source of much speculation but no proof. At all events, even if there is life in the nearest and most comparable of planets, Mars, it may not be life as we know it here on earth, where it is determined by peculiar chemical and physical conditions which may not have their counterpart elsewhere. On earth, the conditions which support life in such abundance are, nevertheless, very limited in their range; otherwise, life would cease. The conclusion is that the chances of the repetition of a livable environment elsewhere are so very slight that life is confined to an almost inconceivably small corner of the universe. It is still premature for us to define its final limitations. It seems that life must once have begun, but no properly informed man can say with absolute conviction that it will ever end.

The preliminary view of living beings discusses the growth of an orderly classification of life forms, out of which the progress of biological knowledge arises. To Mr. Everyman, his body is of the utmost importance, hence the understanding of its structure as a machine, its complexity and harmony, how it works and wears out, will interest him greatly.

\*THE SCIENCE OF LIFE. By H. G. WELLS, JULIAN HUXLEY, and G. P. WELLS. Two volumes. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. \$10.

### This Week

"Massacre."

Reviewed by MARY AUSTIN.

"Traitor or Patriot."

Reviewed by FRANK MONAGHAN.

"Freud and His Times."

Reviewed by JOSEPH JASTROW.

"New Russia's Primer" and "Why Recognize Russia."

Reviewed by MAURICE HINDUS.

"The Virgin and the Gipsy."

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT.

The Bowling Green.

By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

### Next Week, or Later

The End of an English Era.

By WALLACE NOTESTEIN.

view of Thornton Wilder's book, in which Wilder's agreeable ironies were squelched because they embodied the ideas of an outworn class. Classes do disappear, but ideas never; monarchs depart, but Shakespeare (the monarchist) remains. Critics, and their readers, who are already licking their chops at the prospect of judging the vitality of every important book of the next ten years by the easy test of whether or no it is based upon the faith of Communism, should read a little in the futile critical literature of the legitimists and the republicans in the early eighteen hundreds. They will not be stopped by what they find there, but readers may take warning.



Book two describes the chief patterns of life, starting with the first or highest phylum, the vertebrates, with their several subdivisions; the semi-vertebrates; the arthropods, such as the shrimps, crabs, and barnacles; worms of diverse sorts; jellyfish, sponges, and so on, down to unicellular forms. Plant life is also discussed in a comparable way. "How does it feel to be a plant?" A natural question, yet our authors believe that it is difficult and probably wrong to think of conscious individualized plants, for their tissue is organized in quite a different way from our own, and they should be regarded as an unconscious race rather than as a number of rigidly differential persons. Aside from a fundamental contrast of food sources, with all that it implies, this is perhaps the most striking distinction between the two great kingdoms of the organic realm. Of the lowly and minute forms, some of them are plants, some are animals, and some lie in the borderland between the two, but the extreme smallness on the part of many is perhaps the most remarkable fact of all.

Our knowledge of living forms is far from complete, and yet, of larger organisms, there probably does not now exist anything that is new, despite the rumors of sea-serpents and other strange beasts which are continually being reported.

Book three sets forth the incontrovertible fact of evolution, and contrasts the older belief in special creation with the newer and more logical interpretation. The rocks, with their contained fossils, give us our first line of proofs. The nature and scale of these records, the degree of completeness, and the way in which the continuity of evolution is shown by the familiar horses, and less familiar sea-urchins, all are set forth with clarity and considerable detail. "Missing links" there probably always will be, and to those who reject evidence which lacks perfection, these have often been a stumbling block. Many of the so-called "missing links" of our forefathers have come to light as the result of startling discoveries, every one of which strengthens greatly the chain of evidence. Their absence does not greatly disturb the scientific evolutionist, but he rejoices when they are found. Much evidence for evolution is also gained from the comparative study of plant and animal structure; likenesses are fundamental; the differences, on the other hand, arise from adaptation to peculiar needs. The vestigial structures which result from the discarding of useless organs, once valued by their ancestors, can be interpreted in no other way. Finally, embryology, or rather the individual life history, is used as evidence.

Other topics treated in the first volume are variation and distribution; a general statement as to the evolution of man, his place in nature and in time; fossil men; and the evidences for evolution found in Mr. Everyman's own body, which is a veritable museum of evolution in itself.



Perhaps the greatest single test of the value of this work lies in the simple, clear, yet sufficient exposition of the various controversies which have arisen concerning the how and why of evolution together with the most widely accepted modern explanations of what is an extremely complicated process. Belief in the fact of evolution is universal among the informed; but in the ways in which it came about there is room for honest difference of opinion, and probably always will be, for it is true of all knowledge, perhaps, that the more we know, the less sure are our convictions, and we are more and more impressed with the futility of some of the earlier, simpler explanations. Here technicalities necessarily enter in; but our authors have everywhere preserved a happy balance between the use of technical terms and that simplicity of language necessary for the understanding of Mr. Everyman. Having reviewed such factors as genetics, the growth of the individual, the determination of sex, variation of species, and selection, the story of the majestic process of evolution in time is presented. Sundry environments, such as the sea, the fresh water, and the land, react strongly upon their inhabitants whose adaptations are of the utmost interest, as are some special aspects of life, such as size, range, color, mimicry, and the chemical wheel.

A comparatively new science is Ecology, the relation of the organism to the environmental complex, and the discussion of this naturally leads to its application to man—the assaults of various diseases, his nourishment, the influence of fresh air and sunlight, and his general health.

Book eight is on behavior, feeling, and thought, the rudiments of which are traced among lower animals, especially insects and other invertebrates, next the vertebrates, and finally mankind. A detailed dis-

cussion of the brain and its functions leads to that of human behavior, modern ideas of conduct, and those curious phenomena on the borderland of science—dreams, telepathy, clairvoyance, spiritualism, the mythology of future life, and the supreme question of the survival of personality after death.

Book nine deals specifically with the biology of the human race, and the work reaches its fitting conclusion in the present phase of human association.

This work is to be commended for its clarity, freedom from factual error, charm of literary craftsmanship, but, above all, for its appealing human interest. General readers, as well as the authors and publishers, are to be congratulated on its appearance.

## Uncritical Criticism

MASSACRE. By ROBERT GESSNER. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by MARY AUSTIN

"MASSACRE" is another of those Indian books which are appalling because too close to reality and at the same time regrettable because not quite close enough. It is true that our treatment of Indians has been inhuman, dishonest, and stupid. It is true that many Indians still lack the ordinary decencies of living; that their death rate from diseases brought to them by our civilization almost qualifies the book's title; and that the paid medical service provided by the Indian Bureau has been negligent and too often incompetent. It is true that the educational facilities granted have been inutile and debilitating, in addition to being cruel and debasing. It is true that a practice has been made of kidnapping Indian children and keeping them for years from their parents in boarding schools where they have been systematically beaten, underfed, overworked, and exposed to contagious diseases. It is true that the Pima Bridge, the Navajo Bridge, and numerous other alleged improvements on Indian property paid for by Indian money, are really conveniences made for Whites in direct opposition to the needs of the Indians. All these things that Mr. Gessner says in his book, and many more of the same character, are true, and *you know it*. At least, you have been told it steadily year in and year out, ever since Helen Hunt Jackson first told you in "A Century of Dishonor." But it is also true that many of these things have changed for the better within so short a time that it is unbelievable that Mr. Gessner's neglect to note these changes is entirely without guile.

"Massacre" is interestingly written. It is also, to a serious extent, misrepresentative. It errs even as most public business errs in the United States, because of a rooted belief among American people that all causes, and especially good causes, should be stated in terms of a preferred solution. Because in a democratic society like ours even the best of causes is eaten by the unsatisfied hunger for applause, for the distinctions of moral preferment, and for an aristocracy of well doing among its supporters.

Our Indians are, and have always been, ever since we appropriated their country, in evil case. They are in need of help, in need of intelligent help and common justice. Mr. Gessner has evidently been deeply stirred by their plight, and as most of us are who know that plight, profoundly indignant at the hypocrisy which has kept it a continuing condition. Mr. Gessner has also discovered John Collier, Executive Agent of the Indian Defense Association, and has either neglected to inquire into, or has deliberately overlooked other agencies of relief, other measures of reform, other methods of achieving them. He has credited to Mr. Collier ideas which in the main have been the goal of other friends of the Indian for a quarter of a century before Mr. Collier saw Indians. He has totally failed to take into account two or three movements now proceeding steadily on behalf of the Indians, two or three fundamental factors otherwise contributive. And with so much of what may be a genuinely unconscious bias, he has also been unfair to the present Administration in dealing with Indians.

It is obvious that nothing can excuse Mr. Gessner for failure to acknowledge more candidly the recent gains in raising the appropriation for feeding the school children. Many of his statements referring to recent contentions of the Bureau are directly contradictable by the facts. There is no excuse for overlooking the fact that the most fundamentally remedial effort that has ever been made on behalf of Indians is proceeding successfully with the full co-operation of the Department of the Interior.

Like everybody else who honestly attempts to befriend the Indians, Mr. Gessner discovers the immense share that stupid ignorance plays in our treatment of them. But he does not yet know the Indian well enough to realize that our prime stupidity has been to try to force all Indians, whether they have any inherited disposition toward it or not, to make a living by farming. The tribes have been given farming land, not in every case absolutely sterile, land upon which white men with their inherited aptitude for agriculture and their ready access to agricultural experience, might have managed to live. The lamentable condition of many of the tribes at present is due to the fact that they have not known how to live on these lands. In the meantime, we have failed to discover that the chief factor in the Indian's unfitness for agriculture is compensated for by extraordinary gifts for hand craft. The movement now well launched and successfully working out among several Southwest tribes, of reinstating the Indian in his hereditary arts, should not be left out of any consideration of the Indian's situation. This work, while initiated before the present Administration went into office, has been heartily seconded by that Administration and is carried on with its full knowledge and approval. The question naturally arises why should Mr. Gessner have failed to include even a mention of this new departure. It should have had at least a chapter in any book purporting to deal with that subject.

Of Mr. Gessner's direct attack upon the present conduct of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, one can only say that it seems somewhat beside the mark. The real evil perhaps, consists in their being a Bureau at all. The inutility of all bureaucratic methods in dealing with human problems was never so clearly demonstrated. And back of that lies the characteristic incapacity of the average American to apprehend and judge inherent racial capacities different from his own. The remedial measures which the author of "Massacre" attaches to Mr. Collier's name are mostly sound, but they would reach only the obvious difficulties. So long as there are current, and operative against the Indian, such misconceptions as Mr. Gessner's own book reveals, the recommended reforms will afford no real spiritual and cultural relief.

## The Case of Casement

TRAITOR OR PATRIOT: The Life and Death of Roger Casement. By DENIS GWYNN. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith. 1931. \$3.50.

Reviewed by FRANK MONAGHAN  
New York University

JOSEPH CONRAD in 1903 wrote of Casement: "I can assure you that he is a limpid personality. There is a touch of the conquistador in him too; for I've seen him start off into an unspeakable wilderness swinging a crook-handled stick for all weapons, with two bulldogs, Paddy (white) and Bidy (brindle) at his heels, and a Loanda boy carrying a bundle for all company. A few months afterwards it so happened that I saw him come out again, a little leaner, a little browner, with his stick, dogs, and Loanda boy, and quite serenely as though he had been for a stroll in a park. . . . He could tell you things! Things I've tried to forget; things I never did know." The following year his official report to the British government on conditions in the Belgian Congo told an astonished world things that it had never known and which it has not yet been able to forget. Casement began his career modestly as a purser on a boat in the West African service, became fascinated by the dark mystery of the jungles, and spent several years in explorations. He spent some time lecturing in the United States before returning to join the British consular service in Africa. When he returned he was shocked to observe the great changes in the conditions of the natives and the horrors which had been introduced by the Belgian rubber concessions in this vast Congo district which was under the personal protection of King Leopold. Under the régime of that generous and enlightened monarch the natives had discovered that the rubber tree was the most noxious and fatal of the forest plants and that the agents of the rubber companies were the most savage of the beasts of the jungle. Casement became a special commissioner of the British government to investigate. Alone he penetrated the depths of this wilderness to discover how a large native population had been reduced to abject slavery, to forced labor; how they had been made the victims of inhuman