

a richer man in a cinematographic New York where, as in Renwood, males turn as she passes and utter a reverently lascivious exclamation.

Many will read and enjoy Miss Brush's new novel. Like all her other writing it possesses a happy brilliance of phrase and a faculty of holding the reader's interest. Certainly the story deals with a phase of American life familiar and dramatic. "Red-Headed Woman" should be a popular book and from a literary standpoint it possesses virtue even though its faults gleam as clearly as its shining detail. Perhaps the greatest weakness in the book is in its characterization, all of the characters being figures with single characteristics who, like brightly painted robots, lack all elements of human surprise. Miss Brush writes with a continual brilliant levity but between her comedy and her reader's laughter she holds a steady contempt. While her satire is sharp it is too seldom subtle and there is in it neither indignation nor pity. It is a brittle, hard book about a brittle, hard world. The identity is fitting.

"The Singing Pyrenees"

BASQUE PEOPLE. By DOROTHY CANFIELD. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ELEANOR MERCEIN KELLY
Author of "Basquerie"

ANY new book with a Pyrenean flavor is an event to one who knows her Pays Basque, and when it happens to be written by so skilled a pen as that of Dorothy Canfield, the pleasurable anticipation is doubled. That perhaps is why in this case fulfillment is just a little disappointing; one had expected, it may be, more than was quite fair. For skilled though it be, Miss Canfield's pen is not a romantic one; and there is something essentially romantic, for all its matter-of-fact practicality, about a people so deeply rooted in an undiscovered past, content to inhabit the same valleys, the same fields, the same houses as their quite remote ancestors, retaining practically unchanged for thirty centuries a sturdy racial entity. And this despite the pressure of an ever-changing world close upon them, despite the fact that always their men have roamed the seven seas in search of profit and adventure.

Certainly visitors to any strange land get out of it very much what they take to it. That is perhaps why so little has been written of Basques. The average traveller, or reader, is content to regard the race as a sort of mixture of French and Spanish; with neither of which has it the slightest ethnological affiliation. It is said that no one not of Basque blood has ever mastered the Basque tongue. The Basque nature is even more difficult, notwithstanding a surface affability; to get below the skin requires more than a brief, or even a long, residence in that country. A certain sensitiveness to racial differences is needed, some deep-lying, perhaps atavistic sympathy, impossible no doubt to one of purely Anglo-Saxon strain.

That Miss Canfield should make little errors common to all authors writing of a people whose tongue is strange to them, is not surprising—as, for example, the naming of a certain house "Etchonda." This would be the same thing as to name one of our own country-places "House," since any Basque homestead is an etchonda. Again, "Gachucha," which she uses as a proper name, happens to be in reality a term of endearment, the equivalent of "pet" or "darling." While it is just conceivable that the very undemonstrative Basques might call some cherished female relative "Aunt Pet," or "Cousin Darling," it is not likely.

This sort of gaffe is too trivial to need mentioning. Others seem more important, on the part of an author who undertakes to represent to alien minds the personality of a people. Basques, for instance, rarely marry as we say "for love," although natural inclination is taken into account by the elders who arrange the marriages. Courtship such as she mentions here, licensed petting-parties between a properly affianced couple, would be unthinkable among the decent village folk the author describes.

Nor have I ever, in a rather intensive study of things Basque, happened to come across a single authentic instance of suicide—three of which are mentioned in the space of this one small volume. Suicide has never been a Basque gesture; it is one of the things that simply are not done, partly for religious reasons, partly as a

matter of temperament. There is no strain in the Basque nature of a morbid melancholy not uncommon among their Spanish neighbors, nor yet of the detached *je m'en fichism* which infests agnostic France. Your typical Basque is a practical if not too-pious Catholic, a robust and outdoors sort of person, with a vigorous enthusiasm for work and sport alike, and almost invariably a racy, ironic sense of humor. He is, in other words, a congenital die-hard.

Humor, indeed, is what I miss most in these stories. Irony is the note of several—"The Saint of the Old Seminary," and "Gold from Argentina" especially—but there lacks the droll, sly Basque chuckle which makes such mockery good. Nor is the manner of the tales quite convincing. I doubt whether a remote Basque village pedagogue, through whom most of the episodes are told—or indeed any European pedagogue who had not been educated in the United States—would translate her native idiom into quite such colloquial American as "guess again," and "hard-boiled," and "it's no go." I doubt whether she would describe one of her pupils as a "pretty little trick," or on the other hand whether she would habitually refer to all the non-Basque residents of Europe as "Aryan."

As a matter of fact, these stories, with one exception, might almost as well have been laid in any corner of Western Europe, or indeed of America, as in the Pays Basque. Nevertheless, they are good stories, full of that tolerant knowledge of our common humanity which may always be expected from Miss Canfield. Certain phrases are memorable as aphorisms: for example—"Nothing can be accomplished by anybody who is thinking of two things at once"—"Don't pretend to me that at your age you have never observed how sensitive people are completely helpless before callous ones, conscientious ones before unscrupulous"—"Because some dogs kill sheep, should one stand coolly by without lifting a hand to pull a drowning puppy from the ditch?"

The book would be worth reading if only for the account of Papa Guignol, who, when the terrible storm of '27 destroyed the ancient puppet-show upon which his neighborhood had grown up unto the third and fourth generation, was instantly voted a grand new one by the town council, even before they had taken time to restore their fallen roofs and to repair their washed-out roads.

The one exception which appears to me recognizably Basque in feeling is the last tale in the book: dealing with a certain summer three hundred years ago, when the hysterical epidemic of witchcraft then raging through Europe reached the Pays Basque while all the men were away at the Newfoundland fishing-banks, and took heavy toll among the unprotected, over-wrought wives. This story of how two very young sons of one of the accused women—sane, strong-willed Dominica Dargaineratz—set sail across the Atlantic in their little boat, with their senile grandfather and a crippled uncle, to bring the whaling-fleet home to their mother's rescue, has an authentic Basque thrill to it; and one shares Henry of Navarre's reputed shout of laughter over the picture of that handful of embattled neighbors of his, fish-hooks in hand, putting to rout the dreaded Courts of Sorcery and all the majesty of French law, before they turned literally to beat the devil out of their wives and live happily ever after.—Not that there are not plenty of witch-folk still remaining in Labourd and the Soule! But as a certain old Basquaise of my acquaintance remarked: "They have learned, those ones, how to keep their place—which is assuredly not in the *ménage*."

My discontent with Miss Canfield's book is that there is not more of such stuff in it. She seems oddly to have missed the virile, galliard quality of a race which has given to the world more than its share of fighting jongleurs, warrior housewives, and bold sea-rovers such as Michel the Basque, who declined to have his gangrenous leg cut off because he felt that a really successful pirate needed all the legs he had.—And how could anyone have lived even one round of seasons in those happy hunting grounds of lost Atlantis, and managed to absorb so little of the colorful, dramatic beauty of a background which in itself explains the age-long tenacious Basque attachment to place!

Here is an art that seems to me better adapted to its usual thoughtful portrayal of modern conditions close at hand, than to a happy presentation of those prehistoric highlands and hinterlands called by old bards "The Singing Pyrenees."

A Crinoline Type

RED LIKE CRIMSON. By JANE PARADINE. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by HENRY WALCOTT BOYNTON

THIS is the first book of a new writer who will surely be heard from again. The publishers call it a novel, it reads like autobiography: is, in either character, a remarkable study of late Victorian childhood and youth—and of course parentage. The setting and personnel are familiar, a rectory in the peaceful English countryside, a father and mother who outwardly conform to the ways of their time, and a group of normal children, two girls and three boys, destined to be "brought up" in the peremptory Victorian fashion. The rector is an English gentleman, correctly born and bred, who happens to have taken the Church as his profession. He honestly holds a gentleman's faith, correctly performs his religious duties, and away from them is worldly and self-absorbed, as much squire as parson; a good average Britisher of his class. He is fond of his children but not disposed to be bothered by them. They understand his affection and make allowance for his occasional testiness. "Father was half in the wrong often when he was cross, and though he wouldn't say so, we both knew, and he didn't mind. But if Mother was angry, our happiness was blotted out."

Mother was never in the wrong; she could be angry with an offender for days together. Her children feared her, and there was something abject in their worship of her, as of a divinity beautiful and malign. Her personality dominates the household. Its strangeness is obscured by conventional form and phrase. Beneath her snobbishness and her religiosity burns a daring individualism, and her coldness in ordinary relations is the sign of a temperament essentially if unconsciously Lesbian. There is always some person of her own sex on whom, while the infatuation lasts, she lavishes the attentions and endearments for which her daughters go hungry. All this without scandal or grossness; Mother's odd habit of being queer about certain people somehow gets itself accepted by her husband and children as a natural part of her. She, without question, is the person who lifts this record from plain chronicle to the subtle portrait of a pagan in the Victorian-evangelical setting. Does she understand herself? Is she a deliberate tyrant, egotist, and hypocrite? That is a question the reader must decide for himself, since the chronicler leaves it artfully open. Mother is true to her role, if not to herself, even on the deathbed which she contrives to make so effective and dramatic. Her whole status, the meaning of her life, hangs on the assumption that she is going to leave desolation behind her. What will Father do without her who has always "stood between him and everything that could hurt him?" She imagines him haunting the place of their union—or of his subjection. He must never leave it: "If he goes away, his life will be quite broken. . . . He will get to love my grave, and will make little plans for making it beautiful."

And so she goes out of life, suitably and sentimentally, quoting Tennyson. But irony only waits for her passing; her sufficient epitaph is written in the immediate relief and zest with which her children and her husband, relieved of the spell of her presence, take up their new freedom. A cruel and credible study of a type that could hide among the crinolines and moral platitudes of the nineteenth century, even as it can hide under our own sun-tans and tags of quasi-scientific patter. But this is also a portrait of a person that is likely to hang in the gallery of memory longer, perhaps, than one would wish.

The Uses of Adversity

(Continued from page 225)

anything but liquor and women, let them escape from their covers, or stay longer in the brains of their readers than a cocktail in the mouth, and what a scurrying, irritated ant heap New York would become, or Los Angeles, or London! No danger. These books are weak reflections of discontent, not the "eidólons" Whitman used to talk about, and which even his massive imagination could not raise for the money-mad latter nineteenth

century. And is it not fortunate that only now and then a great book, like Rousseau's, breaks through the crust of indifference and makes a generation turbulent! When they begin to read pamphlets instead of tabloids in the subways, a wise man will plant potatoes on his Connecticut hilltop, see that the well is cleared out, and try to find his grandfather's woollen underwear.

M. André Maurois, in his playful article in the *Atlantic Monthly* on what a visiting Frenchman should know of America, is surely right when he says that we are an intelligent race, quick to absorb new theories of living, and quicker still to forget them. He is thinking, perhaps, of the mobile American middle class that swings this way and that, after both slang and philosophy. For them these bookshelves pop like yacht cannon; then off they go after a new firecracker.

Prosperity is the reason. No foreigner seems to realize that we are a race susceptible to impassioned thought—as our Jeffersons, our Emersons, our Henry Georges prove; but no sooner has a philosophy of living taken hold than a wave of California metal, or New England textiles, or Minnesota wheat, or Detroit automobiles, sweeps up and over it. No one is truly philosophical, no one does five-year planning, economically or spiritually, while the boom is on, and America has boomed every ten years or so for centuries.

If this period of unsettlement lasts long enough—and it will, for even when most have jobs again the industrial system will be creaking down to some new "adjustment"—adversity may have its uses, though the new morality will never call them sweet. At this moment the literature of how to live in hard times (which includes about three quarters of all the world's greatest books) seems to mean just about as much for the average man or woman as the drone of an irrelevant airplane far overhead. But it will begin to be read and felt again; and at the same time the voices of our contemporary Cassandras will begin to penetrate. We shall not believe them, they may carry only to the ears of the literate, but these at least will begin to think. Thinking, of course, is not enough. They must feel, and for that poetry, which may very well be more important than steel or cotton in the next century, is essential. More of that anon.

A Balanced Ration for a Week's Reading

BROOME STAGES. By CLEMENCE DANE. Doubleday, Doran.

The story of a family consistently devoted to the stage, spanning the period from the mid-eighteenth century to the present day. A notable novel.

BLAINE OF MAINE, HIS LIFE AND TIMES. By CHARLES EDWARD RUSSELL. Farrar & Rinehart.

A portrait of the Plumed Knight, and his stormy political career.

FORSAKING ALL OTHERS. By ALICE DUER MILLER. Simon & Schuster.

A narrative in verse.

The Saturday Review of Literature

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The BOWLING GREEN

Translations from the Chinese

THE OVERCOAT

YOU Americans, said the Old Mandarin,
Are great admirers of Personality;
Therefore let me tell you a story
Of the Austrian poet, Rainer Maria Rilke.

Rilke, visiting a friend in Vienna,
Left his old overcoat behind.
Years later there was another visitor at the same house,
A shy, gloomy philomath,
Who was dubious of women, regarding them
As flies in the ointment of Thought.
He was writing a Downfall of Civilization,
And his only pastime
Was to wander in a dense melancholy
About the lively streets of Wien.

There came a spell of cold wet weather
And his host lent him Rilke's old overcoat
To wear for his afternoon stroll.
When he returned, the guest's demeanor was odd:
Several times he began to speak, and checked himself.
The next day he did not come back until after dinner,
And the following time, not until midnight,
Accompanied by a whiff of wine
And several cheery young women
Whom he introduced vaguely to his hostess
As companions of hazard.
Agitated, he explained privately to his host
That every woman he met had been giving him the eye.
One accosted him on the street,
Another sat down beside him at a pavement café
And asked what he'd have.
One beckoned to him from a passing taxi,
Some even followed him from the counters of department stores
Prettily tucking themselves inside his elbows
And nestling on his lapels.
Their bright eyes, their inquiring minds,
Their appetitive curvatures,
Surrounded him with exquisite chatter,
Abolished the impartial tenor of his mind,
And kept him out very late on park benches.

Aber du, said his friends in amazement,
You, who announced that women
Are only subordinate clauses,
Dangling participles in the human syntax?

I can't imagine what they see in me, he said dolefully.
They whisper the most extravagant things;

One said, as soon as she saw my back far down the street
She knew I was what she had been looking for so long.
But the sad thing is,
It's only outdoors that I seem to interest them
As soon as we go inside
They appear vaguely disappointed, and fade away.

His puzzled friends
Who knew there was no future in this sort of thing
(Either for the philosopher or the young women)
Suddenly said, Ach, don't we remember
That was the coat poor Rilke wore
That time he was writing those sonnets?
Evidently there was some mystic power
Exerted by the garment,
So to save their friend from attentions
That were endangering his austerity
They put the coat in camphor
And, as it was the beginning of winter,
Hurried the philosopher
To a milder climate.

I fear there is no moral
Except that, as your prophet Walt Whitman loved to reiterate,
Life effuses all sorts of eidolons.
But I think if this story were known
There'd be more sale for Rilke's books.

✻ ✻ ✻

MANNERS

"What, haven't you read Voltaire's *Dictionary*?
I'll bring my copy round for you."

Not at all, replied the Old Mandarin.
I hope I have better manners than that.
I'll come to your apartment
And pay my respects to it there.
Voltaire does not call on us,
We call on him.

✻ ✻ ✻

THE FIRE ESCAPE

It was built as a fire-escape
But meanwhile the tenants find it more useful
As a metal connection for all the radios
To pick up the wave-lengths dashing high
On the stern and hidebound coast
Of our apartment house.
Queer to think that down those rusty stairs
Have come Gandhi on tiptoe
And Bernard Shaw in his heavy brogues
(Oh Dublin Assurance.)

MODERNISM

While she was telling the Old Mandarin
How very modern she is
He was observing
That she serves Old-Fashioned Cocktails
From an antique cobbler's workbench.

✻ ✻ ✻

CHAIN LUNCH

I like taking my lunch at Bickford's,
Said the sage, unwrapping a salmon sandwich
(With a slice of lemon neatly imbedded in the crack
Like a twinge of Chinese venom
In the heart of a canticle).
It pleases me to think, as I sit here,
That also in Boston, Baltimore, and San Francisco
Some unknown Bickford brother
Also recruits his courage
On a platter of corned beef hash.

✻ ✻ ✻

CATHEDRAL

It's refreshing, in a land of overmuch speed,
To see things moving slowly and with patience.
I stand in the great nave of your unfinished cathedral,
(Beautiful indeed, with late afternoon brightness
Through the open western end)
And I think to myself, there need be no hurry.
God will still be there.

I have seen too many long-finished cathedrals:
There is more thrill in watching one in progress.
I like the scaffolding and wooden fences,
The lumber and guy-wires and blocks of stone.
In the yard is an incomplete statue,
A lady with scroll and key, and an owl on her shoulder.
Wisdom, perhaps. Wisdom is never complete.

I like the idea of the Pilgrim Pavement
Where 88,000 stones at \$5 each
Have already been paid for
And there is room for 12,000 more.

An Italian stone-cutter was asked
How many more years to finish? Three years?
Tree year? he cried. Ten year! Maybe hundred!
We have to stop. No money.

Yet perhaps that tall nave, a ship of vision,
New York's paradox, New York's anomaly,
Reaches as high already
As the Empire State.

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USED CAR

I've sold the old sedan, Diana of the Crossways,
(We haven't any use for her in the city)
But how much more I sold
Than just a 1928 Boilroaster.
The Used Car Exchange was pretty contemptuous
And said they'd have to spend a lot of money
To make her look
Like a New York City car.

But I remember once, seeing her outside my window,
Suddenly realizing what space and power were latent
In a few feet of metal, rubber and glass:
Miracles of possibility, miracles of life and death.
How close she may have skimmed
The dark angel with a ticket.

How much more I sold. . . there went with her
Several thousand miles of sun and snowstorm
Never to be retraced.
The Motor Parkway in sherry and scarlet,
The wayside jugs of cider, the blazing lamps at dusk;
Hot noons under the Cathedral tree,
Thunderstorms at Lloyd's Neck,
Children undressing in the car;
The high shoulder of a hill in Vermont,
Berkshire inns gracious to tousled travelers,
Salt Northeast rain between New London and Stonington
And terror crossing the 59th Street bridge in streams of traffic
Where man's greatest panorama teases the edge of the eye
But the driver dare not look aside.

Regarde mon visage et pars assuré
Said the little blue emblem on the dash
(Remember to cancel that insurance!)
Which I carefully unscrewed.

We filled in the Bill of Sale:
For one and other dollars was the dealer's odd phrase
For, says he, suppose I sell her to someone over in Jersey,
It's better if he don't know what I paid for her.
Whoever the chance customer may be
He'll never know how much more he buys
Than was listed in the Bill of Sale
And somehow I hope it won't be Someone Over in Jersey:
I have a feeling she'd like to go back to Long Island.
She was in the garage, a mechanic looking her over,
And as I went down the street
I heard a blast of her mellow horn.
One of those queer things that happen,
As though she was saying—

✻ ✻ ✻

WAIT FOR THE LIGHTS

On West End Avenue one-way traffic
Shoots hasty merchants uptown at dusk.
See the Old Mandarin kilt up his robes
And pause in doubtfulness.
What are you thinking, O. M.?

Among the speeding cars
He quotes the Ancient Mariner:
They passed me by
Like the whizz of my crossbow.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Things That Ain't So

SORRY BUT YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT
IT. By ALBERT EDWARD WIGGAM. Indian-
apolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.
1931. \$3.

Reviewed by JAMES FUCHS

EVERY schoolboy knows (or
would know, o lector benevolen-
tissime, if he were as well-in-
formed as thou art) that the late
lamented Viscount of Verulam, in his
youth, took all knowledge for his prov-
ince. Mr. Wiggam, in the comprehensive
imperialism of his mind, hit upon a better
idea: he started, years ago, from the
plausible assumption, that what the pub-
lic doesn't know, would fill a library—
meaning, what the public *doesn't* know
and he *does*—and he began to stock up
that library by the successive publication
of a number of useful volumes contrasting
wrong notions on important topics with
right concepts, or what he considers such,
according to his lights.

This is the difference between his pre-
vious volumes and the present one: here-
tofore he contented himself with one spe-
cial subject, to be illumined in one volume.
But now his alarms and excursions,
within the covers of a single volume of
moderate proportions, lead him into an
amazingly large number of provinces of
the human mind—all of them backwoods,
with a jungle growth of prejudices as
difficult to remove as a New York Dock
Commissioner with an income of twenty
thousand a year. Some of these precon-
ceived notions are scarcely worth while
removing. As for instance: Mr. Wiggam
insists, with uncalled-for emphasis, that
the ostrich doesn't hide his head in the
sand. Well, if he doesn't he ought to.
Besides, how many ostriches, in moments
of imminent peril, has Mr. Wiggam ob-
served? Any lawyer can tell him, that it
is well nigh impossible to prove a mere
negation. He shouldn't try. He goes out
of his way, to disprove errors that are not
of the slightest consequence—as for in-
stance, the old saw that ministers' sons
usually go to the devil. The saying, if
wrong, is a self-defensive one on the part
of the laity—they want it to be under-
stood that they remain in secular life, to
improve the chances of their offspring in
the world-to-come; if right, it is a beauti-
fully even-handed scheme of Providence
—two saintly generations, in straight suc-
cession, won't do: turn and turn about is
fair play. Some of Mr. Wiggam's contro-
versial points are utterly hopeless, as far
as corrective effect upon the persons to be
converted is concerned—fancy a chapter
superscribed:

*You Are Wrong if You Believe THAT
YOU KNOW HOW TO WIN AN ARGU-
MENT.*

That is an insult levelled at the head
of the public in general, which will be
resented, not only in schoolrooms, bar-
rooms, court-rooms, legislative assem-
blies, and other crowded haunts of argu-
ers, but even in awful solitudes seldom
trodden by the foot of men, such as the
Alkali Desert of Arizona, or the Reading
Room of the Rand School Library.

It must not be supposed, that *all* the
chapters of this amusing and tolerably
instructive volume are either trivial, or
far-fetched, or of vapidly generic tenor.
There are a good many that are worth
while reading, and some that are fine
specimens of a Cobbett-like, forcible,
argumentative prose. Mr. Wiggam seems
to entertain some of the prejudices of a
rather unimaginative and humorless ra-
tionalism—but that won't hurt his book;
it keeps the reader in countenance; if his
prejudices are to be exposed, then he
won't take it amiss, if he stumbles now
and then upon a prejudice of the author's.
To quote an instance: what Mr. Wiggam
has to say about telepathy, is dictated by
sheer ignorance—and casual ignorance,
in a book so brashly and domineeringly
educational in manner and purport, will
be felt as a welcome slip by overawed
readers.

A three-day Conference on Creative
Writing is to be held under the auspices
of the School of Letters of the State Uni-
versity of Iowa on October 29, 30, and 31.
There will be round tables on Creative
Writing and the Universities, Creative
Writing and Journalism, and The Mid-
west in Letters.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW regrets that by an
error at the engraver's, the date of the
letter from Joseph Conrad reproduced in
last week's *Bowling Green* was altered
from 1920 to 1930.