

Points of View

"Poetry"

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

No doubt you have seen the April issue of *Poetry*, in which Miss Harriet Monroe throws a challenge into the arena of American art. But in case you have not, you should be told of it, so that the *Saturday Review* can help if possible.

It seems that unless a sufficient sum is guaranteed for the continuance of *Poetry*, it will have to die with the present volume. The hard times and deaths among the guarantors have so diminished the magazine's income that it no longer can be carried on unless the deficit is corrected. Miss Monroe is more than willing to stop, but there has been such a storm of protest (accompanied by nothing more substantial than words) that she has sounded an SOS to those who want her to go on.

If after twenty years of unequalled service to poets and the public, *Poetry* is allowed to die for lack of \$3,500 a year, it will be a terrible criticism of the American literary world. I am not writing this as spokesman for either Miss Monroe or her periodical, but as a very humble contributor and subscriber who is determined to do everything in her power to stop this catastrophe. Can't you do something to help?

MARY N. S. WHITELEY.

Washington, D. C.

Time Tables

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

At last I have found someone who can see some sense to that great book "The Railway Guide." It used to be my bible and many are the hours I have spent studying it. Mr. Morley's article in the *Bowling Green* has found at least one appreciative reader.

Do you happen to know that the Maryland and Pennsylvania is affectionately called the Ma and Pa?

And speaking of railroads which don't go near one or more of the towns for which they are named there is the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk (commonly the Nipanden) which starts at Delmar, Delaware (on the Maryland line) and ends at Cape Charles, Virginia. Also the Chicago Rock Island and Pacific which ends at Santa Rosa, New Mexico. And one road for which I have always felt a great affection—the Ouannah, Acme, and Pacific which is, as I remember about 90 miles long and is located somewhere in south Texas near the gulf. With what high hopes must that road have started its career!

Some time ago you mentioned the Youghiogheny in one of your *Bowling Greens*. Does the Railway Guide still give the Pittsburgh, McKeesport and Youghiogheny a separate existence? It is a part of the New York Central system.

And in closing I would call your attention to the Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway—"America's Greatest One-Day Trip. The Crookedest Railroad in the world. Twelve miles from San Francisco, no cogs, no cables, steepest grade 7 per cent."

Have you ever traveled on the poor old Erie and passed through Horseheads and Painted Post, N. Y.? Those towns always seemed to me to be more suited to the wild and woolly open spaces of this great Southwest!

Again I say three cheers for the man who can see the romance of the Railway Guide and also can write most delightfully about it. WILLIAM CHAUVENEL.

Santa Fe, N. M.

The Exploring Racket

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

Now that exploring has become a "racket," and the writing about it a source of income for the facile scribbler in pseudo-science, who supplies an alternative to the readers gorged with best sellers, the encountering of one more of the Wonder Tales occasions no surprise; but it is a matter for astonishment to find a recently published book by F. A. Mitchell-Hedges favorably reviewed by reputable journals, though damned by *The Saturday Review*.

Of course, at present, the Maya graft is being worked industriously by every writer who takes the tourist route through Central America. No doubt Mr. Mitchell-Hedges and his traveling companion visit-

ed some of the ruins known to Dr. Gann, but his references to the vast unbroken jungle stretching through the less known parts of Guatemala, San Salvador (actually the capital city of the republic of El Salvador), Spanish Honduras, and Nicaragua to Panama, would give a moment's passing amusement to the coffee and sugar planters, the cattle owners, the politicians, soldiers, and adventurers of all races, who in addition to the native Indian, have passed their lives in this region since the time of the Conquistadores, and particularly to those of the present inhabitants who saw the expedition traversing so much of the jungle by motor, chair-car, and steamship. If Quirigua and Totonicapan are jungles, so is Bronx Park. The former is passed by the railroad from here to Puerto Barrios, and the latter can be reached by motor car in a few hours.

Santiago Volcano is a small crater near Managua, and the journey to the top takes two or three hours by motor, followed by an hour or two on horseback.

Finally, the Nicaragua revolution to which reference is made, was viewed by the Mitchell-Hedges party from a distance of several hundred miles, in the capital city of Managua, where they were lodged at the principal hotel, and were entertained by the President at a tea dance. The most revolutionary activity they saw was the sewerage and paving of the city, then being initiated under the writer's direction.

Very sincerely,

HENRY WELLES DURHAM.

Guatemala City.

What He Bought

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

Since you seem to be interested in book prices, sales, authors, and what not and since you appear to desire the truth and nothing but the truth, I am giving you herewith my "buying reactions" to a recent, number of the *Review*—an ultimate consumer speaks!

These are the books I wanted: "Chaos Is Come Again," "Hopi Girl," "Flesh Is Heir," "Boomerang," "Unicorn," "Fathers of the People," "Unclay," "1919," "A Glastonbury Romance," and "Two Living and One Dead." These are the books I actually bought; "Fathers of the People," "Unclay," "1919," "A Glastonbury Romance," and "Two Living and One Dead." Five selected and five rejected. Why?

Price. Two dollars and fifty cents should purchase a worthwhile book. A book that you can enjoy, keep and read again. Today, two dollars and fifty cents should purchase only quality in the book business. Applying the theory of price, and of lasting qualities, "Chaos" was discarded as unimportant; "Hopi Girl" as not worth the price; "Flesh Is Heir," too expensive for that sort of stuff; "Boomerang" and "Unicorn," too much for two hours of romance.

"Fathers of the People" was purchased because of its author; any book by any Powys is automatically purchased by me because I like them and dare to believe them important. "1919" stayed because I like Dos Passos and refuse to wait for the dollar edition; "Glastonbury Romance" may be the book we've all been waiting for during these three dreary publishing months. So it stayed. Besides, it was by another Powys! "Two Living and One Dead" may be important and I still like hard-boiled Swedes!

Those are "consumer facts," pleasant and unpleasant. Today, the consumer cannot keep pace with the publishers. When you started your campaign, we hoped that a lower price would maintain it for no other purpose than to restrain the publishers. We thought—in our ignorance, that if publishers had to get out large editions in order to make a profit, they would be a little more careful about what they published. We even thought they'd give up "me tooing" by publishing "similar books" whenever a hit does appear!

Seriously, the book business may be deflated in sales and profits, but until it can deflate its production of just books, books, and more books, it will continue to so far outstrip the income of the consumer of books that its future may well be worse than its immediate past and present.

Very truly yours,

HARRY R. WELLMAN.

Amos Tuck School of Administration and Finance, Dartmouth College.

Notes of a Rapid Reader

Another volume of the highly important *British Documents on the Origins of the War: 1898-1914*, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, has just appeared. This is Volume Seven on the Agadir Crisis and in its documentation may be regarded as definitive. (British Library of Information, 270 Madison Avenue, New York City. \$4). . . . Two more interesting textbooks have just appeared, the first *A History of the Novel in England*, by Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes. (Houghton Mifflin. \$3.25) begins with Elizabethan fiction and comes down to *Ulysses*. There is a bibliography and the general purpose of the book is to bring out the relation of the novel to the interests and attitudes of successive ages. . . . The other text, *Types and Times in the Essay*, selected and arranged by Warren Taylor, (Harper. \$2) seems to be an interesting and valuable book for the study of the essay in all its types. It includes a prefatory essay on the essay and then groups of famous essays classified with two or three particularly interesting sections, one consisting of essays and letters on the art of writing, the letters having been written for this book by a group of British and American contemporary authors. The section called *Essays on College Matters*, and the section *Essays in American Life and Problems*, are also fresh and interesting. . . . Among miscellaneous books should be noted *From Intellect to Intuition*, by Alice A. Bailey, (Lucis Publishing Co., New York), a study of the philosophy and practice of meditation; also *China Speaks: On the Conflict Between China and Japan*, by Chih Meng, Associate Director of the China Institute in America, (Macmillan, \$1.50); and in very different fields another of those contributions to what might be called practical and immediate sociology which the University of Chicago has been publishing. This book is called *The Taxi-Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life*, by Paul G. Cressey (University of Chicago Press. \$3). The author says, "the taxi-dance hall before summarily dismissed from thought as 'a den of iniquity' should be analyzed in terms of the human relationships which it fosters." . . . Last in this group is *The History of Pestilence: (1625)* by George Wither, edited by J. Milton French (Harvard University Press. \$2.50). George Wither's poem on the dreadful year 1625, through most of which England was manuscript. . . . Sir Josiah Stamp has written a little book of primer size called *The Financial Aftermath of War* (Scribner. \$1.75). Some authoritative economists, at least, do not think highly of it. . . . Those interested in what some people call the new softness of hard scientists will wish to see *The Religion of Scientists* edited by C. L. Drawbridge (Macmillan. \$1.25) which contains recent opinions expressed by two hundred Fellows of the Royal Society on the subject of religion and theology. . . . Important essays on Judaism will be found in *Judaism at Bay* by Horace M. Kallen, an authority on that subject (Bloch Publishing Co.). . . . Geology has, for all those who once studied it, a lasting fascination. A good book, scholarly but written with sufficient simplicity to instruct the general reader and abundantly illustrated, is *A Textbook of Geology. Part 1. Physical Geography*, by Professors Longwell, Knopf, and Flint of Yale University. (John Wiley & Sons.) Such a book should be read before any extended mountain expedition. . . . The sixth volume of the *Vassar Journal of Undergraduate Studies* (Vassar College) contains scholarly articles of a remarkably high standing considering the age of the writers and covering a wide field through Greek, literature, physiology, and economics. Particularly interesting is Betty Frey's study of the archaeological basis for some of the more important Arthur stories. . . . The Yale University Press has published the text of Cennino Cennini's *Libro dell'Arte*, edited by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., a guide to the materials and practice of painting and allied operations written by a painter of the fifteenth century. . . . In lighter fields, William O. Inglis's *Champions Off Guard* (Vanguard. \$3) contains intimate reminiscences of John O'Sullivan, Bob Fitzsimmons, and Jim Corbett, and Alexander Powell's *Undiscovered Europe* (Washburn. \$3) is a pleasing description of Luxembourg, Lithuania, Estonia, Andorra, and Albania. . . . Only Publishers and booksellers will presumably be concerned with *The American Book Trade Directory for 1932* (R. R. Bowker Co.), but for them it will be indispensable. . . . Frederick B. Fisher's *That Strange Little Brown Man*,

Gandhi (Ray Long & Richard Smith. \$2.50) contains additional evidence of Gandhi's dependence upon Thoreau for some of his formative ideas: "On that balmy night, not so long ago, when Gandhi was arrested and taken from his bed on the roof of a Bombay house, it was discovered that he had on the table at his bedside a copy of Henry Thoreau's *Essay on Civil Disobedience*." . . . The last in the series of books attacking and defending Mr. Hoover's record as a mining engineer, a business man, and as the head of the Belgian Relief, has just appeared. It is called *The Truth About Hoover* and is written by Herbert Corey (Houghton, Mifflin. \$2.50). Arthur Train's little book, *The Strange Attacks on Herbert Hoover* (John Day. \$1) effectively disposed of the charges against Mr. Hoover's conduct of the Belgian Relief and made clear that the defamatory books published previously were crowded with mis-statements. As several authorities of judgment pointed out, however, the controversy over his conduct of the Eastern mines was not so easy to handle. Train made clear certain obvious errors in the aforesaid books of scandal, but did not have sufficient specific knowledge of a subject remote in distance and in time to upset all the charges. Mr. Corey has assembled much more evidence in support of Mr. Hoover's actions in the East. It is unnecessary to go further in comment on the rather absurd charges against Hoover's later career, but the questions arising from the mine scandals are interesting and we hope later to have a competent mining engineer analyze and explain Mr. Corey's strong defense. Such an analysis is particularly needed, in all fairness, at the present time.

Trade Winds

By P. E. G. QUERCUS

A NUMBER of readers have noticed, and remarked on, the gay little aquatic window-display in a restaurant in the building of the St. James Hotel, on 45th Street, West of 6th Avenue. Beside a small ornamental pond bask two tiny mermaids, one green and one blue, in attitudes of allure. We regard these as symbolic of our own fish: mermaids who have occasionally been mentioned in this department. Pilgrims to that part of 45th Street will also be sure to look at Uncle Sam's umbrella shop nearby, where Charley Chaplin's flexible canes are made. There is always much of interest to see on 45th Street, including a tavern hung with the originals of Ripley cartoons. Old Quercus used to think of offering a free renewal of subscription for the best descriptive essay written about 45th Street. But the theme is so alluring he wants to keep it for himself, and very likely the subscriber would renew anyhow.

One of the very pleasantest loitering places in a warm lunch hour is the back garden of the Gotham Book Mart, 51 West 47. Passing through that excellent bookshop you find yourself in a large courtyard, with tables and flowers and brightly painted boxes of second-hand books like those along the Seine. There is even a sort of old barn in the yard where books can be studied during a shower. One litterateur in the neighborhood likes to bring his luncheon sandwich and cold canteen into the courtyard and look over the books while he chaws. If he drops crumbs in a book he always buys it, as a matter of courtesy.

In his excellent talk at the recent booksellers' convention in New York, Dr. Larry Gould, geologist of the Byrd Antarctic Expedition, reported that the most read book in the library taken to the South Polar regions was *Green Mansions*. The three authors most favored by this group of 42 men locked up in the ice were Donn Byrne, Joseph C. Lincoln, and Mark Twain.

As graduation present, don't forget First Editions. Looking over a number of current catalogues I find two firsts listed by Alfred Goldsmith, 42 Lexington Avenue, that seem very reasonable. Conan Doyle's *Rodney Stone* (London, 1896) at \$3.00 and Bret Harte's *Tales of the Argonauts* (Boston, 1875) at \$4.00. These prices are typical of the bargains that alert browsers can pick up nowadays. This is going to be the best summer that ever was for the intelligent book-hunter. In years to come, how we shall brag of our finds.

(Continued on next page)

Round about Parnassus

By WILLIAM ROSE BENET

PETRARCH'S "RIMES"

HAVING had Joseph Auslander's translations of *The Sonnets of Petrarch* in 1931 from the firm of Longmans, Green, I now discover the *Love Rimes of Petrarch* translated by Morris Bishop and decorated by Alison Mason Kingsbury, come from the Dragon Press of Ithaca, N. Y. (240 Linden Avenue). Mr. Bishop is no such poet in his own right as is Mr. Auslander, and his few chosen "rimes," as compared with Mr. Auslander's exhaustive translation of the sonnets, seem rather flat. Years ago Agnes Tobin did beautiful translations from Petrarch. She was a California poet of a distinction that few seem today to remember; and now, unfortunately I have not her work by me to which to refer. Her dedicatory sonnet to her translations is one of the finest sonnets it seems to me that has been written in America. Being no scholar of Italian I cannot comment upon Mr. Bishop's abiding by the letter; only it seems to me that his translations do not sufficiently recreate the distinct and individual flavor that must have been in Petrarch's beautiful verse. In the foreword to his own volume, Mr. Auslander soundly quoted from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's preface to his translations of the *Early Italian Poets*, that "The life-blood of rhymed translation is this—that a good poem should not be turned into a bad one." That is, surely, the root of the matter.

AS TO TRANSLATORS

How many translations of French and German poetry do we not, for instance, come across in libraries where, no matter how literally the translator may have followed the text, the flow of the verse, the freshness of the imagery, the particular quality lent by the original language to the sound of syllables and what Edward Roland Sill anglicized from the German as the "Clang-Tint" of words, seems to have been worked into some utterly stale and unprofitable equivalent. When I first read Francis Thompson's translations of Victor Hugo's poetry for instance, after ploughing through some of the bald and uninspired stuff that passes for translation among schoolmen, I was amazed. It may be that Thompson produced a different Hugo from the original, but he certainly produced poetry of remarkable quality. And that to me is by far the more important thing: to give us some actual hint of the man's greatness. Translation, of course, offers any number of difficulties, as has been often said. There are no equivalents in English for certain expressions in a foreign language, and vice versa. Poetry, that depends so particularly upon the evocative power of metre and rhyme and even of syllabification, is particularly hard to transpose into another tongue. One reaches only an approximation, at best. But there, I think, is

where a poet of distinction turned translator has the advantage. Once he has absorbed the effect that the original produced upon his senses he can work the content of the poem into a transposition that loses less of the quality of the original than it easily might. Mr. Bishop's work seems to me dignified, but to lack, for the most part, that alchemy—rare enough, I grant. However, he has merits. I quote what seems to me one of the best of his translations:

*Life hurries on, a frantic refugee,
And Death, with great forced marches,
follows fast;
And all the present leagues with all the
past
And all the future to make war on me.
Anticipation joins to memory
To search my soul with daggers; and at
last,
Did not damnation set me so aghast,
I'd put an end to thinking, and be free.
The few glad moments that my heart has
known*

*Return to me; then I foresee in dread
The winds upgathering against my ways,
Storm in the harbor, and the pilot prone,
The mast and rigging down; and dark and
dead
The lovely lights whereon I used to gaze.*

THE GYPSY TONGUE

In his *Romani Poems* (Oxford University Press), John Sampson presents the songs he sang to the Gypsy guitar both in the original Gypsy language and in the English equivalent. He claims in his short foreword that "Rarely, indeed, does one meet with an ancient and synthetic language which has remained so fresh and unsophisticated, and so entirely unfettered by any literary tradition: small wonder then if I succumbed to its charm and magic." He also says, however, that his poems are no translations, "and I fear that the English rendering can convey to the Reader but little of the spirit and sound of the original verse." He does not claim most of them to be specifically Gypsy in thought and feeling; some are adaptations from German, Spanish, and Latin sources. Opposite each poem in *Romany* is set its English equivalent, usually in prose. But at the end of the little book there is an interesting reversal, as Robert Burns's "MacPherson's Farewell" and a song of Mary Coleridge's are turned into *Romany*, with the exact form retained; and by reading forth and back one may gain some slight idea of the differences in sound at least. Some of the other poems have a pleasing mischief. "The Apotheosis of Augustus John" (who furnishes a charming frontispiece in colored chalk to the volume) is one example of this. Another is "Nether Things." The ballad of Count Arnaldos is most graceful. It is a variant of the Spanish ballad that James Elroy Flecker adapted so beautifully in his "Lord Arnaldos," except that

Flecker's hero "on the Evening of St. John" met with the sailor of a magical ship, and Sampson's Count "on the morning of St. John," a girl in a Gypsy van. Both made the same answer however to the plea as to what they were singing; for they would only tell their song to the one who went away with them.

RELIGIOUS VERSE

Mary Dixon Thayer, the author of *Songs Before the Blessed Sacrament* (Macmillan) has written verse and short stories since 1915, and produced a novel. Furthermore, she received for her verse the Contemporary Verse prize in 1924 and the Browning Medal in 1925. To the general public she is probably best known as standing thirteenth in the National Tennis Ranking for 1928 and holding the tennis championship of Pennsylvania and the Eastern United States for 1927. Her poetry is deeply imbued with Catholicism. She leads a remarkable combination of the active and the contemplative life. But in this particular book of poems is expressed a single devotion, to the Lord of her religion only. The sincerity of the utterance is obvious, the nature of it entire abnegation before the supernal Lover.

*Pour down, O healing Light, into my mind
And tyrannize, O Love, over this heart—
For in all learning I have learned to find
That truth, Beloved, is but where Thou
art.*

Therefore her work must be judged solely as devotional poetry. It is not great devotional poetry. It says the same thing in various ways, burns with intensity, has lyrical movement, but no great command of language. Nor, I think, does the poet care, so long as she may express, however simply, her adoration. Hers is an entirely cloistral attitude of mind.

TWO WOMEN POETS

Two other small books of poems by women, one, *Paduan November and Other Poems*, from Basil Blackwell at Oxford, and the other *Verses: Second Book*, from Humphrey Milford of the Oxford University Press, serve merely to remind me of the many books of verse of about this same level which I have looked through in the past decade. Mrs. Lorna de Lucchi, evidently an Englishwoman married to an Italian, is the author of the first and the better poet of the two. She is graceful and cultivated, but no more. Miss Elizabeth Daryush, author of the other book, has published one former little volume. The work of both women derives from second-rate work of the past, without evincing any particular individuality.

Trade Winds

(Continued from preceding page)

The New York Times reports that John Caples of Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, author of *Tested Advertising Methods* (Harpers) "declares that the average American is approximately 13 years old mentally, and that words not in a 13-year-old's vocabulary are virtually worthless in advertising. In writing advertising copy, Mr. Caples advises, use words you would expect to find in a 5th grade reader. He also warns against attempts at humor. Of the 120,000,000 people in the United States, less than half have a sense of humor"

Per contra, Kenneth Collins of R. H. Macy & Co., in *The Road to Good Advertising* (Greenberg; what dull titles these Big Shots use for their books) welcomes a grin now and then in his copy. "People will think all the better of our merchandise if we have the good judgment to treat it lightly and entertainingly."

There's going to be a lot of reading done this summer; even more than usual. And I think people's minds are turning toward some of the older books, the tried and proven stuff, things they always intended to read but never got round to. Putnam's Bookstore tells me they've had a surprising number of calls for Marx's *Capital*. I myself have a considerable yen to read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*: there may be analogies between what happened to Rome and what's happening to us. Suppose (just for the sake of supposing) that you knew this summer was going to be the last chance you'd ever have: what books that you'd never read would you want to try?

How pleasant to find, in Mr. O'Malley's second-hand bookstore on Columbus

Avenue (about 75th Street; open evenings) one of the nice old Houghton Mifflin copies of O. W. Holmes's *Our Hundred Days in Europe* with the little emblem of the Autocrat stamped on it—the breakfast coffee-urn with wings and spectacles. There, for 25 cents, was a clean copy of 1888, marked 10th Thousand; it was published in '87. I had never forgotten his famous blurb in that book about the Star safety-razor, one of the grandest bits of free advertising any article ever got. Dr. Holmes describes how he changed color and his knees shook when he went to Quaritch's in London and found that a first folio Shakespeare was then worth £785. But my favorite quotation in the book is "Every New England deacon ought to see one Derby day to learn what sort of a world this is he lives in. Man is a sporting as well as a praying animal."

Detective stories:—There's a new Reggie Fortune, a new Dorothy Sayers, and they tell me that *The Rumble Murders* by Mason Deal is worth attention. "Mason Deal," I understand, is a pseudonym for T. E. Eliot, brother of T. S.

Amusing to observe that the numbered and signed racket has got into stamp collecting, too. I note in a stamp dealer's display an envelope marked thus: "This is No. 12 of 75 letters carried in the airplane *Spirit of Veedol* on the first non-stop trans-Pacific flight." Signed by Messrs. Pangborne and Herndon.

The fine binding racket was grand while it lasted. When the Gibbon comes along to do the Social History of 1920-30 he mustn't forget the \$25 copies of Webster's Dictionary bound in levant with insertions of carved cinnabar. There were actually people who bought them.—Among the phony de luxe bindings there were often some very good ones, too. They are good Graduation Presents, and selling, just now, far below normal value.—I know one brooding bookseller for whom \$2,000 worth of f.b.'s from London arrived in the customhouse on the very day of the original stock market crash.

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