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of LITERATURE

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GROVER CLEVELAND AT THE PRESIDENTIAL DESK.

Too Much of the Truth

READERS still middle-aged can remember the great age of illustration in the eighties and nineties and earliest 1900's, and will be interested to know that at least one English critic believes that the most typical, and sometimes the best, examples of Victorian art may be found in the pages of old magazines. In America, then, Howard Pyle was in his prime, and those who visited his classes in Wilmington will remember how his pupils' drawings or paintings, were placed on the easel while the master called for criticism. "Does it tell a story?" His own pictures invariably told a story, and in our day, when contempt for the merely narrative or descriptive in painting has reached an emphasis perhaps overemphasized, it is well to remember that the great illustrations of that period were sometimes good pictures by any test, and always fulfilled their function as illustration to the delight of those who saw them.

Was it the new philosophy of art that drove illustrations which were, in their own way, art, from the pages of popular magazines, to be succeeded by photographic effects the appeal of which is clearly to less esthetic readers, and which did away entirely with the practice of illustrating fiction? A doubt may be permitted. For it is clear that the most successful good fiction of the twenties and early thirties illustrates itself. That descriptive realism which came in with Wells and Bennett in England and Lewis in the United States secured its admittedly powerful effect by what a recent critic has described as the massing of detail, a method which Dreiser, with less art, carried to its maximum. More closely considered, it is quite evident that the cogent details which depict in a cinema of words a day of Babbitt, or the environment of Ann Veronica, or the trivialities of a hotel clerk's life as he skirts, and hangs back from, tragedy, were used to tell a story by these writers very much as Howard Pyle's lines and shades were contrived to give reality to a dramatic moment. In the novels, the illustrations were absorbed in the text, and what they lost in direct appeal they gained in elaboration and multiplication. Recent books, originating in Germany, where a long story is told entirely by pictures, repre-

sent the last effort of the illustrator to win back his lost province.

This is no argument for the return of illustration to fiction and to poetry, where, even when it was good, it was often an irrelevance or an impertinence, as so often now in the illustrated popular magazines, where only the worst stories, the worst poems, seem to be adequately illustrated. But the change does raise one of those interesting questions which those who regard literature as a stream must always ask of the entrepreneurs who would dam it at its last profitable moment. For has not self-illustrated fiction been overdone, and are we not getting weary of the infinite detail of a realism that insists upon dragging in everything in sight as a means of telling a story, or writing a poem? The answer is obvious with Dreiser's monumental transcripts of our journalism, and may yet become obvious with Lewis's much more skilful work, which undoubtedly represented, at its best, the best that we could do in this way, and perhaps any way in fiction. But is not the most sweeping criticism to be made against the newer American writers—the

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Transient

By DON MARQUIS

GIVE up the dream that Love may
trick the fates
To live again somewhere be-
yond the gleam
Of dying stars, or shatter the strong gates
Some god has builded high: give up the
dream.
Flame were not flame unless it met the
dark—
The beauty of our doomed, bewildered
loves
Dwells in the transience of the moving
spark
Which pricks oblivion's blackness as it
moves;
A few more heartbeats and our hearts
shall lie
Dusty and done with raptures and with
rhyme:
Let us not babble of eternity
Who stand upon this little ledge of time!
Even old godheads sink in space and
drown,
Their arks like foundered galleons sucked
down.

A Man of Courage*

By WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

FEW men, probably less than ten, have ever occupied the White House, whose life stories were so picturesque as Grover Cleveland's, whose qualities were so deeply marked, whose figures in history are withal so rugged and forthright, and who so unquestionably are the products of the very years in which they have striven and the times which they have done so much to change. In the memory of men now living Lincoln, Cleveland, Roosevelt, and Wilson stand head and shoulders above their contemporaries in the presidency by reason of certain high qualities that made them giants in their day. Cleveland's quality surely was courage. Because Mr. Nevins appreciated the dominance of that quality, because he has been able to dramatize it in this story of his hero and at the same time keep his admiration for his hero's courage under decent restraint, always balancing that courage against Cleveland's obvious faults and shortcomings, he has made a figure that stands up and walks.

Indeed, he has set a rather difficult pace in this biography of Grover Cleveland for his associates who are to follow in a series of biographies of other Americans from the time of Andrew Johnson to the time of Herbert Hoover. This is the fourth book of a series which calls for sixteen full-length biographical portraits, Rutherford Hayes, Carl Schurz, and Thomas B. Reed having preceded the biography of Cleveland.

In this story Mr. Nevins has achieved dignity and poise without sacrificing charm and candor in his narrative. He has had access to the Cleveland letters and many contemporaneous letters. Apparently, the Cleveland family has given every aid in preparing this manuscript yet the volume carries nowhere the odor of an authorized biography. Certainly it is no family biography. Mr. Nevins has made the picture of a man of heroic size, but a man in the rough, a hero by virtue of his stature and not by courtesy of his biographer's praise.

In his narrative this figure of a sturdy, earnest, often prejudiced man with many minor limitations marches gallantly through two decades, the eighties and nineties, when Grover Cleveland dominated American politics. So virile a figure has Mr. Nevins made and so human and so understandable that one wonders what the times would have been without Grover Cleveland. Of course, he was a man of the hour. But without him, what would the hour have been? Grover Cleveland appeared suddenly full panoplied in American politics. Within two years after he was mayor of Buffalo, he was a candidate for the presidency. Woodrow Wilson had a similarly swift promotion. They two, of all the modern American presidents, seem to have been shunted into the White House by forces outside themselves. Wilson had never attended a caucus or a party convention and had served no apprenticeship in practical politics. Cleveland, on the other hand, had worked in the mud of it fifteen years—in the precinct, in the ward, in the county, and on the

*GROVER CLEVELAND—A STUDY IN COURAGE. By ALLAN NEVINS. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1932. \$5.

edges of state politics before he loomed into national fame. But he none the less, made a quick trip from the bottom to the top of the ladder. In the twelve years between 1884 and 1896 during which Cleveland was president eight years and was the unquestioned leader of his party for four years more, his personality, his ideals, gave guidance to the times. He found America dominated by the Republican party, and the party controlled by the veterans of the Civil War in their late thirties and early forties and fifties. Their control was unquestioned. They were sacrosanct. They were professional patriots, temple Pharisees, high priests of the Sanehedrim of American government. Cleveland overthrew the G. A. R. once for all. Of course, he was aided by time and death. From 1884 to 1896 death took its toll of the Grand Army of the Republic under which the veterans were organized to control the Republican party and the American government and years had begun to enfeeble the older leaders. After Cleveland vanquished them, they elected one president after he himself went out—William McKinley—but they did not dominate McKinley's administration. They assumed a proper place in the government of the United States. Their pensions continued but they were going upon the momentum which they acquired during the '70's and early '80's. They passed out of the high places in American politics with William McKinley. They passed out of actual power in the United States because Grover Cleveland, who hired a substitute in the Civil War and stayed at

This Week

"THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF EVOLUTION."
Reviewed by HOMER W. SMITH.

"DARLING OF MISFORTUNE."
Reviewed by J. RANKEN TOWSE.

"SITTING BULL."
Reviewed by MARY AUSTIN.

"I SIT AND LOOK OUT."
Reviewed by RANDALL STEWART.

"THE REVOLT OF THE MASSES."
Reviewed by HENSHAW WARD.

"PETER ASHLEY."
Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS.

"JOSEPHUS."
Reviewed by LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

"THE THREE GENTLEMEN."
Reviewed by H. W. BOYNTON.

"SAVE ME THE WALTZ."
Reviewed by GEOFFREY PARSONS.

"PERSONALITY."
Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS.

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR WORDS.
By DON MARQUIS.

HUMAN BEING.
By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Next Week, or Later
"GOD'S ANGRY MAN."
Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT.

home and minded what he thought was better business than war, stood four-square in the White House, vetoed vicious private pension bills, scorned the demagoguery of the super-patriotism, and snapped his fingers at their vast pretense of divine right to rule the American people.

It was a gorgeous fight—incidentally Grover Cleveland's battles with the veterans occurred over Civil Service, tariff reform, our foreign policy, and the superstitions which gathered around the phrase "the Bloody Shirt." After Grover Cleveland went out of politics, there was no more waving of the Bloody Shirt. He stopped it. The wounds of the Civil War, which Rutherford Hayes began to poultice, really began to heal under Grover Cleveland. Yet he was no "rebel sympathizer"—far from it. He didn't favor the South particularly while he was fighting the evils which the veterans of the North had imposed upon government. Being for the most part Republicans, these veterans were largely high pressure protectionists and upheld the spoils system and sneered at Civil Service. They were jingoists, ultra nationalists, and in every clash upon the battle grounds, where these issues were involved, protection, civil service, and a liberal foreign policy—Cleveland gathered about him public sentiment. He knew how to appeal to the people and curiously his appeal was in deeds. It was not rhetorical. He acted directly, and inspired apparently with such primitive methods that the people understood him and followed him as though he were an incarnate sermon in righteousness. What he said amounted to little; what he did required no explanation.

Mr. Nevins's biography reveals Cleveland fighting these battles and yet it is something more than a romantic story of our American "Jack the Giant Killer"; it is a picture of American politics in the '80's and '90's. One might delete the story by removing Cleveland from the book and one would still have a swiftly moving

written, and the pioneer characteristics took on the shape during the '60's and '70's which began to emerge in the civilization that was bursting upon the plains and mountains in the '80's and '90's. The panic of '93, which was strangely like the depression of these days, came as the result of speculation, over-capitalization, and the inflation of farm land prices, and for six years, four of which were in Cleveland's second term, a period of profound deflation, readjustment, and refinancing disturbed America, and one of Cleveland's heroic hours was the stand against the disorders that came out of that financial cataclysm.

The book is carefully documented and the documentation indicates wide and painstaking search. It is a scholar's work and yet there is no lack of swift movement, no sense of erudition for its own sake, no failure to dramatize an event sharply, when the event requires dramatization. But above all, this is not one of those "smarty" books written by men who study their subjects diligently in order to strafe them intelligently. Apparently, Mr. Nevins had no thesis about Grover Cleveland when he started to write. The story of the man has grown out of the material under the author's hands; which is an ideal way to make a biography; and the tale that is told here, if it is finally a hero tale and it is—is well told, convincingly and with charm, intelligently, and never shrinking from unpleasant truth.

Fifty years ago another series of American biographies was launched and for two decades set standards in American biographies. These biographies were short—not over sixty or seventy thousand words. The biographers for the most part, were in the business of setting up plaster saints. They represented too often the prejudices of the times yet they gave the youth of the generation that is now passing into its sixties and seventies, their first vision of the procession of Americans who had made their land as it stood forty

years ago. This new series of full-length biographies, of which Mr. Nevins is editor, is candid, often stark in its realism, scholarly, and meticulously documented. It reveals the difference in the scholarship of the two eras—the last quarter of the old century, the first third of the new century. Realism has taken the place of prejudice and romance. Imagine the story of Maria Halpin in any biography fifty years ago! A sense of perspective and above all a feeling of the inevitable relation between a man and his economic environment has come into the biographical method. Mr. Nevins's study of Grover Cleveland and the series which he is editing, some day will stand in strong contrast to those biographies of another day and time, revealing conspicuously the different ways men thought and felt in America as the generations passed.

William Allen White, editor of the *Emporia Gazette*, is a close student of American political history, and is himself a biographer, having written lives of Woodrow Wilson and Calvin Coolidge.

Blind Evolution

THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF EVOLUTION. By THOMAS HUNT MORGAN. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 1932. \$3.50. (Scientific Book Club Selection.)

Reviewed by HOMER W. SMITH

NEW book by Thomas H. Morgan, Professor of Biology in the California Institute of Technology, should command, one thinks, general interest among lay readers because the subject of heredity is socially



THOMAS HUNT MORGAN.

and personally such an important one. When the book includes, in addition to new technical facts concerning the cellular basis of heredity, interesting discussions of natural selection, the inheritance of acquired characters, the "Order of Nature," and a critique of sundry metaphysical interpretations of life and evolution one would think that many people not primarily interested in genetics would be interested in reading it. But it is a fairly safe prediction that no such happy fate will befall it. We are tempted to speculate why.

Had this been a book by Eddington or Jeans the first edition would no doubt have been exhausted within a week of publication. This difference in lay interest toward astrophysics on the one hand and biology on the other does not issue, we venture, from differences in the literary proficiency of the proponents of these

respective sciences, nor from any differences in regard to the ultimate significance of the subject matter itself; but rather from an infantile illusion which lurks in the back of most men's heads that by looking through a telescope one can obtain a clearer vision of God, whereas looking down a microscope one can see only molecular aggregates doing an uninspired and uninspiring Brownian dance in protoplasmic jelly. The question whether the stellar universe is expanding or not seems to have greater pertinency relative to the nature of Omnipotence than the question of whether the mutation of genes can or cannot be influenced favorably by environment. Those for whom this may be true should sweeten their astronomy with mysticism while they may; because Morgan and his genes and his not-too-sweet materialism will come into their own one day and the mystics will find themselves on the out-of-fashion side of the philosophical fence.

For this is the significance of the observations and experiments which Morgan and his colleagues are making in genetics: upon the facts which they are slowly discovering must be erected the philosophy of the future, insofar as that philosophy pertains to life and to man, and these facts will not be modifiable by current astrophysical equations.

Morgan is an acknowledged mechanist; by a pardonable juxtaposition I can arrange his own words so that he will define that philosophical position for himself, because he remarks, albeit without self-consciousness, that the mechanists are not trying to explain the universe, but they resent the boundaries set to their progress by metaphysicians.

They even question the finality of the decisions of the metaphysicians. The boldest spirits amongst the mechanists go and claim that in time they have reached within reach of their study of the lucubrations, the obsessions, and obsessions of the mechanists, and which, masquerading under the illumination of introspective and transcendental philosophy, pretend to solve all the riddles

rejected all forms of mysticism, and directs his energies to such aspects of biology as he can see and test by means of his senses and reason.

Braving a recognized danger, we would summarize Morgan's position as follows: mutation furnishes the raw materials for evolution, and mutation occurs without related progression, now in this gene, now in that; successive mutations in any one gene are, although definite, nevertheless random and unrelated. Orthogenesis, or evolution in a sustained direction, is an illusion arising from the relationship between end-stages rather than from any inherent tendency for evolution to occur along definite lines, and it furnishes no evidence of a responsive adaptation or modification of the gene, which Morgan believes does not occur. Mutation is spontaneous, or at least its cause is not known at present, but it may have occurred in the direction of increasing as well as decreasing genetic complexity. In any case, it could have resulted in evolution without natural selection; all that the latter has done has been to reduce the number of new forms which have appeared only to find themselves facing extinction because they lacked survival value. Thus, natural selection is no more than a name denoting the fact that incompetence sometimes leads to extinction, which fact Morgan calls a commonplace.

As It Might Be

SO A LEADER CAME. By FREDERICK PALMER. New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith. 1932. \$2.

TAKING as his text the phrase, "What this country needs is a dictator!" Mr. Palmer proceeds to show what might happen if his own particular type of dictator were to win his way to power.

Connie, as he is known throughout the book, is an unusually able young man who believes that our present form of government no longer fits the necessities of a great modern state. His program, as he outlines it at the big popular rally where he makes his first definite bid for support, includes the following: Revision of the Constitution to meet the needs of our time: the President to be, not the Chief Executive, but the non-partisan head of the state, "doing the honors" somewhat after the fashion of the English king, calling Congress together in times of national crisis, summoning the leader of the Opposition to form a new government when the old one no longer holds the public's confidence; no more divided authority between the executive branches of the Government and Congress; the leader of the party in power in Congress to be the executive head of the Government: each Cabinet officer to sit in Congress, and be ready always to answer questions and expedite business.

Under this system, Connie thought, there would be an end of complaints of the dearth of political leadership. Congress would open a career for real and serious talent. Party discipline would be enforced in the most appealing terms of self-interest combined with national interest. Either vote for this bill or you are out of office on this major policy. No chance to wait for public memory to forget by the time of a regular election. You would have to go before your constituents in six weeks while public memory was still fresh.

The old party wheel-horses bellowed

into the White House without firing a shot. He was Premier for long enough to establish the improved new order, and then he tactfully retired while the Liberal leaders chose a new Premier and President.

If Mr. Palmer's characters are somewhat sketchy as human beings, they serve sufficiently as mouthpieces for his criticism of our present political "set-up" and for a program of change which is at least interesting in a time of so many changing values as this.

Too Much of the Truth

(Continued from page 185)

Hemingways, the Faulkners, the Wolfes, as well as against a spawn of lesser describers of cocktail parties, life on the farm or in the factory, or minutiae in the stream of consciousness—that they are cumbered and entangled by the illustrative method which they have inherited from the '20's? Hence Hemingway's tiresome repetition—at first provocative, but now beginning to reveal itself as a new way of hammering in detail which would no longer stay in the imagination when tacked in by Dreiser's methods. Hence Faulkner's occasional submergence in a dusty cloud of notes on Mississippi, or his use of repeated epithet. Hence, in a different field, the verbiages of description from which one picks out the occasional exquisite or powerful lines of Hart Crane.

Realism requires no such snowstorms of detail as bury us in much of our modern narrative. Realism admittedly does not lend itself to pictorial illustration, and while our taste remains realistic we need not expect a renewal of the golden age of pictures that told the story at least as well as the words of the story they illustrated. But it is time for the word users to find some better way of telling a story, or writing a poem, than by giving us all of the truth in tiresome addition to the truth itself.

The Saturday Review Recommends

This Group of Current Books:

TALLEYRAND. By DUFF COOPER. *Harpers*.

A biography of one of the outstanding figures of the Napoleonic period.

THE SECOND COMMON READER. By VIRGINIA WOOLF. *Harcourt, Brace*.

Essays on books and people by one of the most penetrating and stimulating critics of the day.

PETER ASHLEY. By DUBOSE HEYWARD. *Farrar & Rinehart*.

A story of the Charleston of the last weeks before the outbreak of the Civil War.

This Less Recent Book:

THOSE EARNEST VICTORIANS. By ESME WINGFIELD-STRAFORD. *Morrow*.

A revealing portrayal of the Victorian era.