

Points of View

"Revolution, 1776"

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: The fact that Mr. Preston's "Revolution 1776" has so quickly gone into a second edition and been so extravagantly praised by Van Loon and Rupert Hughes would seem to justify very critical examination of it. It is backed by a vast bibliography to which, however, no footnotes refer.

Now when an author gives no direct authorities for his statements other, of course, than those of accepted fact, what standards does he set himself? May he invent or imagine, without so stating? How much may he borrow from his sources without acknowledgment?

May Mr. Preston criticize Washington at Long Island for failure to use cavalry as though the idea were his own when it really belongs to Charles Francis Adams? May he properly say later, "But, as we have seen before, Washington did not understand the uses of cavalry," when he really means, as Charles Francis Adams points out (p. 60, "Studies Military and Diplomatic"), "Washington has apparently no conception of the uses to be made of cavalry."

I have no encyclopaedic knowledge of the Revolution, but the errors in the field I do know lead me to wonder about the book's general accuracy. I know, for example, that it is absurd to say that "Washington scattered frenzied little groups of men all over the North American Continent . . . they were completely without means of communication with the rest of the Army." "All over the North American Continent" (including Alaska and Mexico?) is schoolboy writing: and to refer, as it evidently must, if it means anything, to Clark at Vincennes, Brodhead at Fort Pitt, Montgomery in Canada, Sullivan at Chemung, as "frenzied" is just being uninformed. And as to their communications, they were magnificent, as reference to such collections as the Clark Papers, Clinton Papers, Brodhead Papers will indicate.

Joseph Brant is called "the white savage." Why white, he was an Iroquois? And who says St. Leger and Johnson hacked at each other's throats going back from Stanwix? Brant and the British are said to have had headquarters at "the romantic wilderness castle of the late Sir William Johnson . . . where they created diabolic schemes." Johnson Hall, to which he evidently refers, was in Continental hands from the summer of 1776 throughout the war. The accounts of Wyoming and Cherry Valley are without a word of truth.

Was Gage Royal Governor of Massachusetts? I thought he was Commander-in-Chief in North America.

Samuel Adams, Preston says, was really "the Father of His Country. Adams conceived the infant and Washington saved its life." What a conception.

The horrors of the '76 retreat across the Jerseys were really, we find, greatly mitigated. Mr. Preston has discovered that every farmhouse could serve "Madeira . . . and more Madeira . . . the Madeira was good." Madeira in New Jersey farmhouses? And it is also a new idea that the Continentals lacked firewood. They were obliged to "gnaw on hunks of frozen soup." Extraordinary.

Throughout the book there is an amazing mass of detailed anecdote which must lead many readers to wonder. I mean all that drinking and those women, and all those fat men and that bad language, and where people got shot. But of course Mr. Preston can always ask doubters, Was you there, Charlie?

"Washington defended Philadelphia out of sheer fear—fear of what his own people would say . . . if he lost the capital. A good general pays no attention to the hysteria of his people." So Lee before Richmond and Grant before Washington were no good? And, incidentally, Washington "panic-stricken" in the days before Brandywine? Panic-stricken?

Then about Germantown: the defeat is in part attributed to weariness of "bleary-eyed men who had not slept for days." For days, Mr. Preston, not a wink, as Dorothy Parker somewhere asked. Why not? They had been at rest "for days" till the night before.

And about "Ogden's New York Militia" at Germantown. They weren't militia, they were Continentals. They weren't New York, they were New Jersey. But it is a small matter.

Now I can't believe, nor have I ever seen any authority for it, that even Gates could play cards the whole day of the Bemis Heights action, nor that Burgoyne's "fine red coat was riddled by grapeshot." Really riddled?

On page 153 Mr. Preston is very critical of Washington's drilling his men in imported European battle tactics at Morristown. If this was so heinous, why on page 225 is it so splendid to have Steuben teaching Prussian tactics at Valley Forge?

And would it not have been a gracious thing to acknowledge that the last two paragraphs of the book are so closely adapted from "The Spirit of the Revolution," by the great scholar, John C. Fitzpatrick?

There is an omission from the index, which scholars will sorely regret. No mention is made of "stomach (belly)." There could have been upward of forty-two references to it.

HOWARD SWIGGETT.

In Reply to Mr. Mather

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: After such an understanding and appreciative review as that by Professor Frank Jewett Mather of my biography of Thomas Eakins, in your issue of April 8th, I should not like to seem ungracious, but certain statements seem to call for comment.

Professor Mather says that "there are naturally minor inaccuracies and here and there a slip in judgment," and then goes on to say that "the New York critics cannot fairly be charged with neglect of Eakins," as "he rarely exhibited at New York, and even at Philadelphia only fitfully." He also disagrees with my statement that the tardy recognition came chiefly from critics favorable to the newest movements.

Professor Mather, who was critic of the *New York Evening Post* for several years during the latter part of Eakins's career, naturally does not wish to see any injustice done to his colleagues. But it seems to me that he has given considerably more emphasis to the attitude of the critics than I myself have. In my book much more space is devoted to the treatment given Eakins by his own city, Philadelphia—and by institutions and clients there, rather than by critics. In only one place did I single out the New York critics: in the affair of the Gross Clinic in the 'seventies; and here I have done little more than quote from their own writings. My comparatively few references to criticism have been general; and I do not think that it would be possible to dispute the correctness of the conclusion that Eakins received considerably less critical attention than many more popular contemporaries.

As concerns the opportunities to see his work, it is not quite correct to say that he rarely exhibited in New York, and in Philadelphia only fitfully. It is true that in his middle years he showed little in New York (a fact which I point out); but he had showed there often in earlier years, and from 1902 on was represented in most of the annual exhibitions of the National Academy and the Society of American Artists. In Philadelphia, except for a break in the late 'eighties, he showed regularly at the Pennsylvania Academy; from 1894 to his death in 1916, in every annual exhibition. The World's Fair in Chicago included a group of ten of his most important works; and he showed regularly at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, and most of the big expositions.

The relative share of conservative and radical critics in the recognition of Eakins after his death is naturally more a matter of opinion. The critic who devoted most space and the highest praise to the memorial exhibition was Henry McBride; and for several years thereafter most of the writing about Eakins, aside from reviews of exhibitions, was done by such critics as Mr. McBride in *The Dial*, Walter Pach in *The Freeman*, and Forbes Watson and Alan Burroughs in *The Arts*. It was Mr. Burroughs who published in *The Arts* the first thorough biographical and personal studies and the first catalogue of Eakins's work.

The above facts, most of which are given in my book, might admit of slightly varying interpretations or emphasis; but I do not feel that Professor Mather has pointed out anything which could be correctly described as an "inaccuracy."

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received.

Fiction

FOREST FIRE. By REX STOUT. Farrar & Rinehart. 1933. \$2.

This is a good example of the modern novel which sets out deliberately to make fiction out of abnormal psychology. The care with which Mr. Stout builds up his background and gives us details in regard to his people does not entirely conceal the fact that the narrative surface is always tightly stretched over a skeleton of laboratory principles. There is, of course, no particular reason why this means of construction should not result in a book as effective and as true to life as any springing from a less controlled impulse, provided the author can vitalize his puppets sufficiently. There are three main participants in Mr. Stout's intrigue, which takes place in the forest regions of Montana, where an elaborate governmental service is necessary to check forest fires during the dry summer season. The Chief Ranger, Stan Durham, is not an attractive personality, though he may be an efficient fire fighter. Nor is the girl who comes to stay at one of his posts, looking for adventure in the West, particularly interesting. The boy, Harry, who brings emotional confusion and eventually tragedy into both their lives is a more cheerful specimen, though even in his case Mr. Stout has felt it necessary to hint at mysteries beneath a happy and careless exterior.

The drama which Mr. Stout has arranged is largely centered on the distinctly abnormal Stan Durham, but the cards are rather unfairly stacked against him by the author. There is much space devoted to the clinical details of Stan's reactions to his friendship with Harry, and in the author's obvious eagerness to prove his point he ends by making him something of an unbelievable figure. If in the end it is doubtful, in spite of much excellent material and straightforward writing, whether "Forest Fire" is a good novel, it is largely because of this lack of imagination. There are moments, in fact, when something extraneous, not devoted to the main purpose of the book, would be welcome, and would enhance its effect. The whole is convincing and workmanlike, but not memorable, and Mr. Stout's people, always a little flat and abstract, follow too often a preconceived line of conduct, and too little the devices of their own hearts.

FAMILY REUNION. By JANET CURREN OWEN. Harper. 1933. \$2.

At Christmas old Mrs. Brinton's family grudgingly returned to the ugly house in Jersey City. They were an odd assortment: there was Opal, who had married a chauffeur, thus putting herself beyond the pale so far as her sister Beryl was concerned. Sylvia, the widow of the only son, returned from her secret life in Baltimore, there to encounter the two daughters she

had deserted years before—Harriet, married to a painter; Rosamund, separated from her wealthy husband. All Mrs. Brinton's boarders were gone for the day, with the exception of Mr. Werner, who was the old lady's star-boarder and a candidate for her aging hand.

The reunion was typical of many others, but on this particular Christmas there were many undercurrents of emotion, petty jealousy, and hatred at work, intensified by the animosity of years and the purely fortuitous events that the past year had wrought in the fortunes of the individual daughters, sons-in-law, granddaughters. There was a great-granddaughter too. The old lady's fluttering and ineffectual attempts to make things run smoothly broke down by the time the day had run its course, but it was the presence of Mr. Werner in the house that brought about the final débâcle.

These many elements in constant interaction, Mrs. Owen has handled with an easy narrative talent—certain complications she resolves, others are brought to a momentary head. Rosamund rejoins her husband; Beryl, the self-righteous, loud-mouthed, martyred daughter receives a momentary set-back; the future is cleared for Mrs. Brinton's fourth romantic escapade; the daughter-in-law, Sylvia, returns to Baltimore to her illegitimate son and her married lover. "Family Reunion" makes consistently entertaining reading and should make a better motion-picture than the average.

SON OF EARTH. By HOWARD ERICKSON. Dial. 1933. \$2.

Here is fiction reduced to its lowest common denominator—short, simple declarative sentences, relating in a matter of fact manner the life of Tolf Luvversen, Danish farmhand in Iowa. It is a chronicle of unremitting toil, simple aspirations, strong passions. Tolf was determined to make something of himself—a doctor, a preacher, anything that would lift him above the drab life of his family and the back-breaking labor he had known from childhood. To this end he studied by himself and dreamed more than he studies. He would save his money and go to school—but then it would be nice to have a bright new buggy and an "English" girl. He got the buggy, but the American girl made a fool of him, used him for her own purposes, threw him aside when she had no further use for him and he got nothing from the relationship but a headache.

This circumstantial account of the day-to-day life of an inarticulate Danish farmhand possesses startling verisimilitude to life. Written throughout in the present indicative ("Tolf does not try to comfort Christine, and she goes snuffing to her room. He undresses and gets into bed, thinking of what lies before him,"), unrelieved by any concern for rhetoric or

"fine writing," detailing the surface aspects of life and making no direct attempt to analyze motives or the sources of action, it nevertheless manages to achieve cumulative force, indicate the origin of motives, and suggest the sources of action. As such it is a thoroughly successful portrayal of a life that does not easily lend itself to fictional technique, that, in fiction, usually either sinks into dullness or explodes into melodrama.

SOME TAKE A LOVER. By ANN DU PRE. Macaulay. 1933. \$2.

Under a title which obviously plays for the let's-be-shocked public and with a jacket so specifically anatomical that it defeats its own purpose, this novel unrolls an old enough story in a modern journalistic manner. An old woman is dying and there is a fortune to be intrigued for. The grandchildren gather at the Long Island country house and await death, getting in as many last minute bids for the inheritance as possible. The story is told mostly in conversational form that is bright enough to keep the reader's mind off the belabored theses. "Some Take A Lover" is one more of those novels which seem to be taking the place of the old long short-story in fiction magazines. As such they fill their brief entertainment turn, but even the slight permanence of book covers rests too heavily upon them.

THE EYES OF LOVE. By WARWICK DEEPIING. McBride. 1933. \$2.

A somewhat idyllic love story, entirely free of any clinical manner, this is hardly in the prevailing mode of current fiction yet one may hazard the opinion that it is something better than most of the brazenly clever, ultra-modern studies. It has no taint of Victorian pruderies, no hypocritical moralization, and it never descends into sentimentality. Its pathos and tragedy are genuine, its characters subtly understood and fully portrayed, and the composition as a whole is well proportioned. Although it leads to a "happy ending," neatly buttoned up in a conventional "lived-happily-ever-after," that does no violence to probabilities, and is artistically satisfying. The story plays against a background of the rural England which Mr. Deeping portrays with finely sympathetic understanding.

HIZZONER THE MAYOR. By JOEL SAYRE. Day. 1933. \$2.

Carrying burlesque to the point at which it becomes burlesque on itself, this snappy story presents in transparent disguise some of the jazziest antics of Jimmy Walker and "Big Bill" Thompson, late Mayors of New York and Chicago, respectively, with laughable but essentially undistorting exaggeration. If the laugh is really upon the American voter, that, too, is a fair hit. Rival campaign sensations reach their climax in a successful scheme for keeping Negro voters from the polls by enticing them to a wholesale baptizing, but the candidate who wins by this ruse is compelled to share the expected spoils of victory with his defeated rival, the outgoing Mayor. A few respectable citizens figure in the narrative, but they are of a sort to make respectability odious. Drinking parties, a beauty contest, and an unconvincing series of murder mysteries help to speed up the action to an appropriately absurd finish.

TUNCHI. By CARL LIDDLE and DAVID THIBAUULT. Century. 1933. \$2.

This is something much better than merely another "jungle novel," or tale of strenuous adventure in the South American "green hell." It is engrossing enough merely as romantic adventure, but, in addition, its Indians are not of the conventional wooden variety, but convincingly human beings. It seems to be anthropologically sound, based upon intelligent observation and first hand study of the Jivaran head-hunting tribes of the "oriente" of Ecuador, that little known hinterland the ownership of which is still in dispute.

The plot of the tale is built upon the quest of a young American who enters the jungle in search of a missing compatriot. This leads him into association with the Indians and also brings contacts with the few traders—"jungle rats"—who exist in the remote districts. It runs through a long series of adventures, including tribal feuds, wars, slave trading, and, above all experiences in Indian witchcraft, and observation of the process of head-shrinking which produces the "tsantsa" or dried head. The Indians, and half breeds, are drawn with skill and apparent understanding; even the heroine is more than a lay figure. The total result is a story of unusual quality, especially in its execution.

THE WATER WHEEL. By JULIAN L. SHAPIRO. New York: The Dragon Press. 1933. \$2.50.

This is naturalism reductio ad absurdum. Following in the wake of Joyce and Stein, it is chronologically right, and in parts, combines the eccentricities of both.

The story concerns itself with the few actions and many thoughts of John Sanford, law-clerk, ex-convict, sinner, legatee of a Litvak match-vendor, and New Yorker in the most provincial sense. Were it not for the fact that Sanford clearly states that he is a graduate of a college in Easton, Pennsylvania, and that he has been two years clerking in a law office, the proverbial sensitive adolescent of seventeen would characterize him; it does anyway. Completely absorbed in his own undisciplined mental meanderings and speculations, Sanford thinks and thinks through the pages of his novel. And every New Yorker who has traveled in subways, walked in Central Park, or eaten at Childs will find some brain child of Julian Shapiro's (John Sanford's) that he can call his own. For this author is observant; and a sensitive passage is almost as frequent as a coarse one.

If the reader enjoys, or believes in the literary value of detailed descriptions of run over dogs, sputum, urinals, the taste of a dime, or manure in a rainstorm, he will find all that, and more, in "The Water Wheel." If he believes that every man is entitled to spell, punctuate, and create words as he pleases, Shapiro will gratify that notion too. If the obscenities of taxi-drivers and drabs is interesting, interest abounds in this book. If an exotic format and type-setting are stimulating, the yellow and green "Water Wheel" will satisfy. And if these qualities make for literature, why then "The Water Wheel" is that. But do they?

International

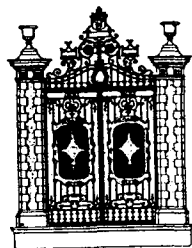
EUROPE AND THE AMERICAN TARIFF. By O. FRED BOUCKE. Crowell. 1933. \$1.50.

With President Roosevelt, at the behest of the "brain trust," plunging us rapidly towards the goal of a "planned society," O. Fred Boucke's "Europe and the American Tariff" has some claim upon the attention. Like Lawrence Dennis, Mr. Boucke knows that the free trader's universal paradise which was the dream of the Manchester economists is an impossibility until we have the world state. Differences in currencies, wage rates, social services, local inventiveness, costs, climatic conditions, inevitably give rise to tariffs in a world of nationalist states. The end of free trade is cheapness, the end of protection is security. "You pays your money and you takes your choice." This doesn't mean that the benefits of security are always passed along to the working population, or that tariffs on finished goods foisted upon a commodity-exporting country do not wreak havoc with the farmers and owners of raw material who find the balance of trade seriously disturbed by having to sell in an unprotected market while they buy in a protected market. Mr. Boucke is aware of the tension existing in a tariff-infested world. Yet price levels under free trade can be smashed in such a way as to get just as much tension through the application of the Manchester tenets. It's a vicious circle. So Mr. Boucke comes out, at the close, for more planning, for "production for domestic consumption, a steadied social economy. . . ." He is against unlimited capital export. His way lies autarchy. This would involve us in its own difficulties. But this is also matter for another book.

MEN OF MARACAIBO. By JONATHAN NORTON LEONARD. Putnams. 1933. \$2.50.

Jonathan Leonard has his prejudices. Possibly because he has written a book about Henry Ford, he is sick of talk about economics, social problems, and the machine age. He dislikes government. He is tired of hypocrisy, yessing the boss, and synthetic liquor. He doesn't cotton to bridge. The termite-men, as he calls them, who are going Fascist or Communist appall him. He doesn't like the American practice of turning out junk to sell to foreign nations who have to borrow American money to pay for the shipments. He is, in short, in a pretty bad way. Yet he has a refuge—the Maracaibo Lake region of Venezuela. Here, where Americans were pumping oil in the late New Economic Era before East Texas glutted the market and put the Venezuelan fields at a disadvantage, there are no sociologists, little prudent greed, a lot of blessed confusion, tolerance, laziness and indepen-

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