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CUBAN BREADLINE
Photograph by Walker Evans (From "The Crime of Cuba")

Before Machado Fell

THE CRIME OF CUBA. By Carleton Beals. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1933. \$3.

Reviewed by RUSSELL B. PORTER

CARLETON BEALS is an idol of the youth movement in Cuba. His sympathetic and vivid pen, always fervid against social injustice, has been a mighty weapon on the side of the revolution. The students of the closed University of Havana love and respect him for his help in awakening American public opinion to the monstrosities of the modern Caligula who ruled with machine guns and bludgeons from the presidential palace in Havana until a few days ago.

It is too bad that this book did not come out before Machado fell. Such a complete and blistering indictment of corruption and oppression would have been a most appropriate prelude to the final conviction and sentence imposed by the Cuban people. Yet the manner in which the problem was solved must have been peculiarly satisfying to Mr. Beals, because the solution was preëminently a Cuban solution.

The United States did not remove Machado from the seat of tyrants by armed intervention. Even the diplomatic intervention of Ambassador Sumner Welles's mediation was only a secondary factor. The decisive element was the general strike—a spontaneous, irresistible mass action of the whole Cuban population for a purely political purpose, brought about by impatience at the failure of mediation to oust Machado promptly. The general strike brought a showdown, and the army, which previously had kept Machado in power, revolted rather than face certain civil war and probable American intervention. That the Cubans themselves forced their blood-stained dictator to abdicate is of tremendous significance to the future of the island republic and of her relations with the United States. To appreciate this fully, one must understand the meaning of the crime of Cuba as Mr. Beals describes it.

Machado, vernal, brutal, horrible as his régime was, was only a symptom, a logical culmination of the real crime. That was that the United States did not really free Cuba in 1898, but only caused the Cubans to change masters. Mr. Beals sees the Platt Amendment and our subsequent policy in Cuba as instruments of political

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Middletown with Cultural Trimmings

THE FAULT OF ANGELS. By Paul Horgan. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by EDWARD CORNELIUS

THIS is high comedy of a kind rarely produced by American novelists. The fault must be the novelists', for as this book immediately makes clear, the material for social satire in America is superabundant. In the city of Dorchester, N. Y.—a name scarcely chosen to conceal its prototype—Mr. Horgan has found a perfect milieu. The city is dominated by Henry Ganson, whose millions have endowed Dorchester with an opera, a symphony orchestra, and a large school of music; this superstructure of cultural activity, unique in Dorchester among middle-sized American cities, throws into high relief the social life of the city, and shows how typical it is.

The musical life of Dorchester—and the musical season is the social season—accounts for the presence of various foreigners, who, instead of creating an exotic atmosphere, intensify everything that is American in the community; hence they intensify the effect of Mr. Horgan's social satire. Indeed, some of them are among his best, and most important, characters. Vladimir Arenkoff comes to Dorchester to conduct the opera, and with him Nina, his wife. Nina is something of a modern Madame Ranevsky, young, beautiful, spontaneous; she approaches Dorchester with a directness and simplicity which disarm everybody from Mr. Ganson to Leona Schrantz, the loose-living landlady; she is the angel whose fault is ambition. She immediately recognizes the artificiality of the community which Mr. Ganson has created, and the inarticulate reality of the individuals who compose it. Her ambition is to make it possible for these Americans to live as she lives, spontaneously and directly; her attempts, and her gradual discovery that this is the last thing these Americans want, are the embodiments of Mr. Horgan's theme. Some of them, like the downtrodden Mrs. Bliss, worship her; some are aroused to irritation, to jealousy, or—like the social climber, Mrs. Kane—to fury; others, like young John O'Shaughnessy, merely fall in love with her. Love, hatred, and ambition deviously guide the destinies of the musical colony of Dorchester.

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Death in the Desert

By EDA LOU WALTON

TURNING into the nineteen-thirties, our literary critics reappraised the preceding twenties. Novelists and poets were neatly pigeonholed. And all this about five years later, for the tide of romantic enthusiasm had begun to recede around 1925. For poetry, the turn came with the publishing of T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland." Out went the romantic poets and in came the classic. The days of the discovery and exploration of America as a new land were done. Robinson and Frost had finished New England. Sandburg, Lindsay, and the prosaic Masters had exhausted the Middle West. The Pacific Coast, save for Jeffers's late arousing, had been quiet. Millay, along with her many brothers and sisters, had worn thin the theme of personal heartbreak and ecstasy. The great "American Renaissance" had not been all its promoters had advertised. Critics pointed out the fact that the most original of the true American poets had been the worst artists, that those, like Millay, dabbling their fingers always in the stream of literary tradition, had sung very much in the manner of the poets of the Eighteen-nineties in England. Neither their subjects nor their methods were, strictly speaking, unique. By 1930 America had found and had lost herself as a literary unit. From this time on American poets recognized that they were, after all, directly a part of the English literary tradition.

With this discovery, the spontaneity of an American folk literature was lost. The poets here became students of technique and of form. The quarrel over free verse ended in a few sneers. Individuality for the sake of individuality was damned. Poetry, it was announced, was not the expression of a people or of a folk living in a certain section of the country, but a fine art, impersonal in statement, bookish in its sources. The poets became scholars exploring the golden past of art and letters. And why? Because the war generation of poets had lost faith in any manifestation of the present world. Eliot had announced the theme of the sterility and vulgarity of this our present country, the land of our physical and mental strivings. And Eliot had developed the new method for writing verse, that of contrasting and comparing an older and, in memory, perfected world of the past with the newer, completely chaotic, and unpatterned world of the present. Promptly following in his footsteps, every lesser poet went intellectual and became depressed. Emotional spontaneity was lost in intellectual doubt. If feeling dared assert itself at all in poetry, it was only as an outcry against intellectual scepticism. And so, almost before the year of 1930 ended, the new school of poets so exactly defined their methods and their subject matters as to declare the limits of their own span of artistic life.

Now in the third year of this span, we find that the new poets have said all that they ever will say. Eliot, who could not go on further with the geography of the Wasteland, once he had fully drawn it, has turned to religion and, in desperation, has become an Anglo-Catholic. Sickened of the panorama of the desert, he seeks the church which, for a man of his birth and culture, is most rooted in tradition. Archibald MacLeish has declared that,

sterile or not sterile, American soil is the only soil in which an American poet may grow; then, directed by his longing for a heroic past, he has written "Conquistador," a history of a great conquest which, for the individual conquerors, ended in failure. Allen Tate, profoundly influenced by Eliot, has spun around himself a cocoon of intellectual erudition and has written poems which very few can understand. He has rediscovered the aristocratic traditions of the South, the only section in America which has an old culture, and has founded there the "Agrarian" school of poetry. These three poets are essentially, it would seem, in agreement with Eliot's political creed—"Royalist."

All of them, and Yvor Winters as well, have followed Eliot's literary models, the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century poets. Nor are they alone. They represent only a kind of committee on scholarship; there are many student-poets taking direction from them.

Hart Crane, alone, of the new generation of American poets concerned with the theme of America and possessed of a strong social conscience, went his own way. Against the full pressure of scepticism and disbelief, he remained a mystic and an optimist. A very subjective poet, he sought for his own symbols and his own myths of prophecy concerning this country. He never belonged to the intellectual school of Eliot. He never discussed the Wasteland. He never found his materials in quotations from older poets. Influenced by the French Symbolists, by Whitman, and by Melville, he remained violently original until his own disorganized individualism caused him to kill himself. But not before he had become, very clearly, a poetic prophet of hope for the oncoming generations.

The lyric poets of the nineteen-thirties, students of form and of literatures as they are, nevertheless remain singers. But singing has in it now the same qualities as

This Week

AMERICAN SPRING

A Poem by JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

A MILLION MILES IN SAIL

By JOHN HERRIES McCULLOCH

Reviewed by Arthur Ruhl

CONGO SOLO

By EMILY HAHN

Reviewed by S. Zuckerman

HISTORY OF GERMANY

By HERMANN PINNOW

Reviewed by Eugene N. Anderson

MELLON'S MILLIONS

By HARVEY O'CONNOR

Reviewed by John Chamberlain

THE UNIVERSE OF LIGHT

By SIR WILLIAM BRAGG

Reviewed by Harold Ward

HAVEN'S END

By JOHN P. MARQUAND

Reviewed by Elmer Davis

THE FOLDER

By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Next Week or Later

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS

Reviewed by BERNARD FAY

All this is a kind of death in the desert. The desert, very clearly, of the intellect. Man does not live by taking thought. Poetry is of the emotions and not of the

intellect. We have seen, since 1925, the effort on the part of our poets to understand a world which is obviously coming to an end, the world in which every life value is denied, in which only a futile and exhausting intellectual research is left for activity. One knows instinctively, that most of these modern poets, forced, as they have been, to renounce spontaneous feeling, living in mechanical cities, trying to comprehend realms of knowledge so contradictory as to give no security, have no real grip on life at all. The most thoughtful of them realize clearly their own predicament, know that, without some faith, they must starve spiritually. The questions, which as poets they must answer, are the old ones: why are men



T. S. ELIOT
From a drawing by Powys Evans
(Courtesy the London Bookman)

Most of the college poets—and one might expect to find new voices among them—are very imitative. Some have grown up in the Millay tradition; some, especially those in the Eastern colleges, have grown

In these words from Michael Roberts's

But even this group of younger poets is intellectual, too intellectual to be deeply emotional. This is their great lack. Intellectually they have accepted new values new ideas. Emotionally they are, as they themselves confess, somewhat deadened. The new values and the new ideas which they assert in their verses are not deeply a part of their subconscious desires, not so much intuitional as carefully and logically decided upon. Therefore, as in the eighteenth century, satire is the best medium for this new poetic expression. Therefore, poetic language is, as yet, quite artificial. There is not in any of this new poetry that fusion between intensely felt emotions and the image used to translate those emotions which is the earmark of all great poetry. This brief quotation from one of Stephen Spender's poems will indi-

Where the hand dwells, mungues, rests;
The architectural gold-leaved flower
From people ordered like a single mind,
I build. This only what I tell:
It is too late for rare accumulation
For family pride, for beauty's filtered
dusts:
I say, stamping the words with empha-
sis,
Drink from here energy and only en-
ergy,
As from the electric charge of a battery,
To will This Time's change.

There is no better survey of what has been wrong with poetry for some eight or more years than A. E. Housman's essay, "The Name and Nature of Poetry." Without once applying his thesis to contemporary poetry, Housman, in defining his own position in poetry, his own judgments concerning it, has cleared away more critical nonsense with a stroke of the pen

American Spring

By JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

But the slow forest drowsing for day on day
On ice and rock, impenetrably old and black,
As watching to slay spring if it should come;
Then suddenly through its corridors pours a ray
Of red-hot metal from a cardinal's back,
And a stray branch puts out a torch of bright green flame.