

Connecticut Town

THE LAST ADAM. By JAMES GOULD COZZENS. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALVAH C. BESSIE

TWO factors that operate in the economic world have, in the past few years, made a more decided appearance in the field of literature: technical skill (and its concomitant, specialization) and competition. In some degree, these factors have always been present in all human enterprise, but it remained for our age, which has made a racket of the craft of fiction, to bring them prominently into the foreground. Surrounded on every side by mechanistic phenomena which supply an increasingly absorbing subject of conversation, it is only natural that an interest in these phenomena should creep into the novelist's work. The teeming press of novels issued every day has forced the growth of an almost universal skill in writing which, unfortunately enough, has operated to the detriment of the art. It becomes a matter of considerable discouragement to the reader eager for substantial material, to contemplate the long line of slick, polished, well-written, interesting but invariably empty novels that every day brings forth. Each newcomer is slicker than the last, each is well-documented when documentation is indicated, each bears witness to a perhaps commendable preoccupation with the mechanics of presentation, each has an interesting or novel tale to tell; none are moving. Examples: "Deep Evening"; "All Ye People"; "Zodiak"; "A Preface to Death"; "The Way of the Phoenix"; "Boy"; "Three Fevers"; "The House of Vanished Splendor." In these eight novels, the reader will find detailed technical information on such varied subjects as transatlantic shipping, the westward migration, aviation, astronomy and tuberculosis, political economy, the merchant marine, deep sea and off-shore fishing, the pioneer tradition. All are ingeniously constructed, facile of expression, and intrinsically interesting; not one has that extra leaven of human understanding that alone determines the permanent place of a book.

"The Last Adam" is just such a novel. In this crowded tale of a Connecticut town Mr. Cozzens has abandoned the specious and puerile symbolism he found so attractive in "S. S. San Pedro"; he has broadened his canvas to include a wider host of characters, and he is discovered to possess a fund of information on power-transmission cables, chain stores, automobile engines, public health, small-town politics, theology, rattlesnake hunting, early American houses, telephone switchboards, and medical science. It would be both ingenuous and ungracious to suggest that these ill-digested details were introduced with the implicit intention of camouflaging an absence of substance, yet that is their total effect.

Out of this wealth of topical detail there emerges a story that should have been permitted to stand on its own legs. "It just so happens," said Dr. Bull, "that barring bone-setting, a few surgical tricks, and some push-and-pull obstetrics for women too soft to turn the corner, I've found out there's no such thing as practical medicine." Until the typhoid epidemic broke out in New Winton, old Dr. Bull had confined his practice to just such "horse-doctor" expedients. He dispensed liberal doses of castor-oil and told people they were all right; most of the time they were. But he reckoned without the snobbish enmity of the wealthy Bannings and the political power of Matthew Herring. There is no doubt that Dr. Bull was lax in his performance of his official duties as New Winton's Department of Health: he had seen no reason to inspect the reservoir, less to examine the sanitary facilities of the power-construction camp. Yet when the scourge broke out he was not found lacking; he worked himself to the bone, practically forced compulsory inoculation, went everywhere at all hours, not sparing his sixty-seven years or his more than average bulk. New Winton, spurred on by the Bannings' animosity and the personal spite of Matthew Herring, found that this was not enough. It remembered

that the afternoon little Mamie Talbot died, the old Doc was nowhere to be found, but it knew where he was. It recalled the sudden disappearance into a retreat of Mrs. Talbot, without reckoning with the fact that Dr. Bull had found her in his garage at midnight, armed with a bread-knife. It recalled a lot of things it should not have considered, and forgot a lot more that it should. Into the bargain, Bull cussed out the indignation meeting, and it required the voice and power of Henry Harris to turn the tables in his favor.

All this makes an interesting, well-told tale, and though the reader may wonder at the introduction of details that have no immediate or ultimate bearing on the course of the narrative, he will be grateful for the sex-spice sprinkled liberally through its pages. Not one of these characterizations, well observed as they all are in their externalities, has the stuff of enduring fiction. Not one of these incidents, entertaining as they all are—compounded of melodrama, sentiment, and broad humor—casts more than a superficial light on human character. There is no dearth of narrative talent here, technique has reached its epitome—what is lacking is of more importance: a profoundly human understanding, based in a final and complete self-knowledge.

self-centered existence Miss Olivier has created a still less believable personage, a Mrs. Bowerman, who may be said to stand for the modern woman in the same artificial sense in which Mr. Chilvester stands for tradition and Victorian dignity. Mrs. Bowerman unintentionally plays a great part in the romance of Mr. Chilvester's younger daughter, which also brings about the death of the crippled elder one.

The intrigue which Miss Olivier has dexterously arranged for these well assorted puppets is sufficiently convincing to make "Mr. Chilvester's Daughters" an excellent book to read, regardless of the fantastic element which the author, as in all her books, manages to introduce with the utmost quietness and skill. One becomes almost as weary of Mr. Chilvester's lawsuit over the non-existent drains of his house as did the county authorities, yet the chief character is so strongly conceived that in the end even this preoccupation seems justified and important in rounding out the whole tragedy. While it may be doubted that Miss Olivier's new book will have the success of "Dwarf's Blood," which was both more compact and more sensational in its appeal, yet "Mr. Chilvester's Daughters" is a superior and more truly characteristic piece of work.



JACKET DESIGN FOR THE ENGLISH EDITION OF "MR. CHILVESTER'S DAUGHTERS."

Chilvester House

MR. CHILVESTER'S DAUGHTERS. By EDITH OLIVIER. New York: Viking Press. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by THEODORE PURDY, JR.

THE stern and forbidding father of the Victorian novels has not had many successors in modern fiction. This is due, perhaps, more to the younger generation's newly savored independence, particularly on the distaff side, than to any decline in the parental desire to dominate. Mr. Chilvester, in Miss Olivier's new book, is the perfect type of the heavy father, transplanted unwillingly enough into the modern world. Yet somehow one never believes in his existence contemporaneously with the existence of, say, Mr. Evelyn Waugh's characters. Both worlds are artificial, and both justify themselves for the fantastic purposes of their authors. Somewhere in between, no doubt, is an index of post-war English life.

Mr. Chilvester lived in a large Queen Anne house, totally devoid of drains, in the Cathedral Close. He lived for his house rather than for his daughters or the life which went on around him in the quaint provincial town. Indeed, what relations he had with this sheltered and clerically dominated world were restricted to making it as unnoticeable as possible to the inhabitants of Chilvester house. Under the circumstances it is hardly surprising that he was continually involved in recriminative correspondences, quarrels, lawsuits, and plain old-fashioned rows with all his neighbors, who nevertheless respected and feared him. For purposes of contrast to this

South American Stories

HOT PLACES. By ALAN PRYCE-JONES. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1932. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THE photograph of a very young man—he was six years old when the war began—looks out at us from the jacket of this trio of South American stories as if saying: "I am clever but nice—I mean, I'm not just clever. See my wide-apart eyes, broad brow, how calmly, candidly, even with a slightly 'uplifted' look (which a bright post-war youth could so easily be pardoned for making coquettish or impudent) I gaze quite beyond the camera-man's little bird and the amusing present to a really 'important' future!"

Is that future then assured for the present sub-editor of the *London Mercury*

and author of "The Spring Journey"? There is enough in the workmanship of these sprightly and keenly observant South American tales to compel the tribute of speculation in the matter, at any rate.

What Mr. Pryce-Jones does, as he explains in a not very profound and rather unnecessary postscript, is to take three typical landscapes, from Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and "let those landscapes people themselves in my mind, and those people form themselves into this book." Thus, the story called "Brazil" is a little love story, the figures in which embody the "naive, exotic, over-emotional" qualities which seemed to the author to stand out in the hot Brazilian air. The woman in the tale called "Chile," who won a dance-Marathon to get money to save her sick child, only to have the child die while she was dancing, has some of the hard, alert, "modern" quality of that country itself. Ecuador seemed to the author the "most rococo" of the South American republics, and he therefore tells the outlandishly tragic tale of a fabulously wealthy marquesa, doña Carolina, who fell in love with, was victimized, and in her old age finally murdered by her husband's villainous footman.

All three tales are packed with excellent local color, but the characters and action of "Brazil" and "Chile" reflect more of an outsider's first impressions of the countries concerned than does "Ecuador." The latter, which takes up rather more than half of the book and is the most involved and ambitious of the three, will seem to most casual visitors to Ecuador to echo "The Bridge of San Luis Rey," or even Renaissance Italy, as much as anything they experienced on the road from Guayaquil to Quito. But of course Mr. Pryce-Jones is permitted to choose the aspect of Ecuador which happened to hit him hardest.

The style is peppered with modernisms. Soliloquies and "asides" are constantly inserted into the third-person narrative—generally through the device of paragraphs begun without a capital letter or quotation marks. The characters are as fond of saying: "How I hate you!" to themselves while speaking politely to the other person, as they were in "Strange Interlude." In "Ecuador," the author's favorite trick is to use the phrase "You must imagine doña Carolina dying" as a sort of recurring refrain to introduce a passage bringing the reader back to that unhappy woman's present. Then, after we have sat beside her for a moment, and felt all the bitterness and disillusion of her old age, we return, through her memories, to that florid past; that mad trip to Europe, years before, with her weak son, Germán, and the scheming footman, when, in a period of crazy, Indian-summer blooming, she threw herself at the villainous Benigno.

The question of the "legitimacy" of such devices may be left for the moment. Suffice to say, that young Mr. Pryce-Jones sees and understands a lot, and that his three stories are clever and decidedly interesting.

Brantwood House, Coniston, the home of John Ruskin from 1871 until his death nearly thirty years later, has been sold. Here he wrote "Fors Clavigera" and "Præterita."

The Saturday Review Recommends

This Group of Current Books:

THE BULPINGTON OF BLUP. By H. G. WELLS. Macmillan.
A novel in Mr. Wells's best vein.

GERMANY PUTS THE CLOCK BACK. By EDGAR ANSEL MOWRER.
Morrow.

A picture of revolutionary Germany, more exclusively centered on politics than Oswald Garrison Villard's "The German Phoenix," recommended last week.

100,000,000 GUINEA PIGS. By ARTHUR KALLET and F. J. SCHLINK. Vanguard.
An exposé of certain widely advertised articles.

This Less Recent Book:

THE ENGINEERS AND THE PRICE SYSTEM. By THORSTEIN VEBLEN.
Viking.
A source book of Technocracy.

The BOWLING GREEN

Shakespeare Industry

REMEMBER once being startled to learn that Shakespeare was not officially admitted to the college library at Haverford until 1872. I had supposed that in a college of resolute old Quaker tradition that was natural, but now I learn from Henry W. Simon's *The Reading of Shakespeare in American Schools and Colleges* (Simon & Schuster) that this attitude was fairly general. Dr. Simon's study is of great interest to any observer of the literary curriculum. He has made a detailed investigation of the history of Shakespeare "courses" and reaches the conclusion that so far as the high schools are concerned Shakespeare is no longer accepted entirely without question as an absolute essential. The advisability of requiring Shakespeare to be read by all high school pupils is protested by some teachers. "In another half century Shakespeare in the high school curriculum may have vanished." This shows that the prevailing unrest has even reached the teaching of literature; no fetish is too sacred to be re-examined.

The vast activity in Shakespeare editing and teaching—one of the major industries—is of relatively recent growth. Dr. Simon points out that though Shakespeare was first quoted in a school textbook in England as early as 1657 (Joshua Poole's *The English Parnassus*) the natural attitude of the American colonists was one of horror toward all drama and playwrights. There is no evidence that a single copy of Shakespeare's plays existed in Massachusetts in the seventeenth century; only one copy has been traced in America before 1700—*Macbeth*, listed in a domestic inventory in 1699.

Of course Shakespeare from the first was popular among young people for clandestine reading. There is an odd allusion in Jo. Johnson's *Academy of Love* (London, 1641) as follows:

There was also Shakespeare, who (as Cupid informed me) creeps into the womens closets about bed time, and if it were not for some of the old out-of-date Grandames (who are set over the rest as their tutoresses) the young sparkish Girls would read in Shakespeere day and night.

And in this country the plays were read privately by college students in the early years of the nineteenth century, but only as forbidden fruit.

Dr. Simon reminds us that Shakespeare entered the school curriculum in the form of excerpts for "declamation." Wicked old Ben Franklin was one of the first to recommend scenes from plays for this purpose, though even he was not hardy enough to suggest Shakespeare by name. William Enfield's book of selections, *The Speaker*, an English textbook reprinted in Philadelphia in 1799, contained many passages from the plays. But even Lindley Murray's famous readers, most influential textbooks in the era 1800-1850, contained no Shakespeare. Murray was an ardent moralizer and purist. Dr. Simon quotes him as saying that Shakespeare caused fatal wounds to youth's innocence, delicacy, and religion—in which there is probably much truth. But in the 1820's and '30's passages from Shakespeare began creeping into the books used for teaching "elocution." The notorious McGuffey Readers, which began in 1836, had at first very few quotations from the plays, but added more in later issues. One American textbook about 1850, Dr. Simon remarks with amusement, in reprinting the courtroom scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, called the Duke Judge, presumably in deference to democratic principle. Not until the 60's was Shakespeare really accepted as fit subject for elocutionary exercise, and the passages identified so that

the pupil might look up the plays themselves.

Dr. Simon tells us that the Troy Female Seminary—under the vigorous leadership of Emma Willard—was one of the earliest schools to teach Shakespeare as organic literature, not just as odd fragments for declamation. That was in the 1830's. Though Boston (true to her instinct of connoisseurship) had timidly considered English literature as a separate scholastic topic as early as 1821. Hartford, Conn., was also a pioneer: in 1848 its high school offered a course of "Elegant Readings in English Classics." In the secondary schools courses in English Literature started roughly in this order: Plymouth, Mass., 1857; St. Louis, 1859; Madison, Wis., and Cincinnati, 1862; Concord, Mass., and Portland, Me., 1865; San Francisco, 1866; New Haven, 1867; Cleveland, 1869; Baltimore and Buffalo, 1870. These, be it noted, were courses in "English Literature," not in Shakespeare. As late as 1895 there were grave doubts as to the desirability of telling pupils too much about authors. The San Francisco superintendent of schools at that date deplored the use of literary biographies in schools. "The exposure of foibles of artists has an immoral tendency on youth; for example, one affects to be a poet, and justifies laxity and self-indulgence through the example of Byron."

The beginning of Shakespeare study in college courses was quite recent. Dr. Simon points out that the first mention of Shakespeare in the catalogue of any American college was at the University of Virginia in 1858—in connection with Old Man McGuffey's course on Moral Philosophy including Esthetics and Rhetoric. The famous Professor Child of Harvard was the greatest single influence, and Shakespeare as a college entrance requirement spread from Harvard all over the land. Even so it was not until 1876 that Professor Child's Shakespeare course was given full time (three lectures a week) and Shakespeare courses at Yale proper did not begin until 1879 (though Lounsbury, at Sheff, had lectured on the plays as early as 1871).

Dr. Simon's book is a mine of interest to anyone who has considered the admittedly queer problem of presenting Shakespeare to the young. He quotes some delightful questions from old college examination papers. In 1892 Bryn Mawr asked her young nymphs to "illustrate by means of *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It* the sweetness of disposition of Shakespearean men and women." But in regard to high schools—do the pupils really enjoy Shakespeare? Except in rare cases, probably not. Several thousand high-school students were asked to grade their enjoyment of seventy-six famous books. The highest place accorded Shakespeare was 30th, *The Merchant of Venice*. *Macbeth* rated 40th, *Julius Caesar* 53rd. But even so, I hope the teachers won't get discouraged. Our youths must be able to recognize the allusion when Uncle Sam is alluded to abroad as Uncle Shylock.

Emil Ludwig's *Talks with Mussolini* has been described as "journalism." I don't know whether the word was used in any spirit of condescension; if so it was a mistake for Ludwig's report of Il Duce is a brilliant achievement. Those who have themselves dabbled in the difficult job of interviewing can best realize how much subtle art and thought went into this four-dimension news-reel of an extraordinary personality. It would have been so easy for Mussolini to have grown irritable or evasive. Ludwig showed the highest qualities of tact and judgment in conducting a delicate affair, and certainly the Dictator himself emerges alive and very appealing. Also as a man of superb courage.

There was one comment of Ludwig's

that specially caught my attention: "Though Mussolini for the most part prefers to let his thoughts go unwatched, there are rare moments when (like all lonely thinkers) he delights in the luxury of being fully understood."

And I dare say that many readers made a private and impossible resolution when they saw the description of Mussolini's desk:

Mussolini's writing table is in the meticulous order of the strenuous worker. Since he clears up everything from day to day and tolerates no remnants, one small portfolio suffices to hold everything that relates to current affairs. Behind him, on an occasional table, are books actually in use, and we notice three telephones. The table is plain and unadorned, bearing no more than a bronze lion and writing materials arranged with precision. The impression produced is that of composure—the composure of a man whose experiences have been multifarious.

Why has no hosiery advertiser made use of the fact that Voltaire was once in the silk stocking business? I learn in André Maurois's crisp little biography that the old infidel set up a stocking factory at Ferney. He sent the first pair to the Duchesse de Choiseul with this message: "Deign, madame, but once to slip them on, and then display your legs to whomsoever you choose."

Aldous Huxley's *Texts & Pretexts*, "An Anthology with Commentaries," is a perfect bedtime sedative. He reprints favorite poems in all moods with notes of high candor and shrewdness. I like his comment on the absurdity of trying to Keep Up.

The educated have to "keep up." They are so busy keeping up that they seldom have time to read any author who thinks and feels and writes with style. In a rapidly changing age, there is a real danger that being well informed may prove incompatible with being cultivated. To be well informed, one must read quickly a great number of merely instructive books. To be cultivated, one must read slowly and with a lingering appreciation the comparatively few books that have been written by men who lived, thought and felt with style.

This is one of the most agreeable anthologies ever put together, and Huxley's accompanying remarks bite shrewdly. Apropos Milton's praise of Eve's long hair, which reached her waist, Huxley remarks:

Hair, hair. . . . The longer, our fathers unanimously thought, the better. How the heart beat, as the loosened bun uncoiled its component tresses! And if the tresses fell to below the waist, what admiration, what a rush of concupiscence! In many, perhaps in most, young men at the present time, long hair inspires a certain repugnance. It is felt, vaguely, to be rather unhygienic, somehow a bit squalid. Long hair has become, as it were, a non-conductor of desire; no more does it attract the lightning. Men's amorous reflexes are now otherwise conditioned.

But do not suppose that his notes are merely in the jocular spirit. There is much fine and tart thinking in his admirable commentaries.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"A real responsibility," says Aylmer Maude, writing in the *London Observer*, "rests, therefore, on the translator of a great writer to transmit faithfully the message he is dealing with, and for this three things are necessary: such a knowledge of the language in which the book was written as enables him fully to grasp its meaning: such an association with the author's mind as enables him to share the thoughts and feelings dealt with; and, finally, such a command of his own language as will enable him to produce a version that reads like an original. I have said 'his own language,' because it seldom happens that anyone has as complete a command of a foreign language as he has of his own if he is a practised writer, and so the best versions are usually made by translators writing in their own language."

An American poet and dictionary publisher has made a list of what he considers to be the ten most beautiful words in the English language. They are: Dawn, mist, hush, luminous, lullaby, chimes, murmuring, golden, tranquil, melody.

A Possible Queen

THE REGENT AND HIS DAUGHTER.

By DORMER CRESTON. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1932. \$3.

Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT

A BIOGRAPHY which contains three such witty and penetrating characterizations as are to be found in this new book by Miss Dormer Creston ought not to want for appreciative readers. Mr. Guedalla in a brief introduction alludes to its "accomplished pages" and praises its intimacy. It is all that he says and more, too. It has the ring of authority, while at the same time it moves lightly and pleasantly, without even a suggestion of the studious labor that must have been entailed, through scene after scene of regally eccentric domesticity. The settings are complete and elegant, even to the inclusion of the Prince's multitudinous *objets de vertu* and the royal child's plentiful toys. But this is all in the way of none too insistent background, against which move the three central personages: George, Prince of Wales, proud, foppish, and unmanageable; his wife, Caroline of Brunswick, vulgar and foolish, but also strangely attractive to nearly everyone but her husband; and their daughter, Charlotte, who, had she lived long enough, would have been Queen of England.

George has been accorded much attention, mainly unsympathetic, at the hands of biographers, but he has seldom received the exact justice that Miss Creston gives him. Unlike Thackeray, she has understood both his swaggering and his cringing, and has been always rigorously fair even about his most absurd peccadilloes. Her very impartiality has forced her into being almost brutal, after a charming feminine fashion, in her treatment of George's behavior to his wife. That princely coxcomb, however, deserves all that he gets. As for Caroline, the abandoned but not altogether unhappy wife—with her Miss Creston is superb. Her crotchets, her hoydenish manners, her German provinciality, even her unfortunate notions of personal cleanliness, all are exhibited, but with such sympathy that we laugh understandingly.

It is Charlotte, the least remembered of the three, who carries the burden of the narrative. Ill-fated from the beginning, she was no sooner born than her parents separated, and she remained to be bandied about between them. Eternal quarreling surrounded her. Governesses and companions passed in never-ending procession, each the victim of the Prince's inconsistent meddling. But through it all Charlotte contrived to flourish. She was too much like her mother ever to develop the proper courtly manners, but she had vivacity, a kind heart, and considerably more sense than was to be expected in a child of such parents. She was never entirely crushed even by her pompous father, but her whole life was a struggle to gain at least the semblance of personal liberty. And when, after her marriage to Prince Leopold, she might at last have attained her desire, she was not to enjoy it. Her death and the death of her child made room for the yet unborn Victoria. Miss Creston's portrait of Charlotte is so vivid and entrancing, and the subject herself so delightfully fresh and spontaneous, that it is difficult, on finishing the book, to refrain from wishing that Victoria might have remained unborn, and that we today might be ridiculing our mid-Charlottean ancestors.

"The number of fictional omnibuses now being put on to the roads," says the *London Times Library Supplement*, "seems to threaten congestion: they are one more sign of times in which as much as possible is demanded for the smallest outlay. Yet whether the criterion be racial, or single authorship, or special content, or merit or place of original publication, these collections of modern fiction are only examples of an old principle. Some would have it that the Homeric poems were an omnibus: the Arabian Nights' Entertainments were certainly another."