

Beard's own final paragraph in his excellent paper on "Government and Law":

So the citizen of the present era may look upon problems still unsolved—lynching a disgrace to the nation, crime widespread and shocking, corruption breaking forth with baffling virulence, periodical industrial crises bringing poverty and misery in their train, vast areas of rural and urban slums. . . . religious intolerance stirred by partisan angers, incompetence still present in government and economy, preparations for wars notwithstanding the pledges of the Kellogg peace pact, vulgarity standardized and worshipped on a national scale, and American civilization challenged as the apotheosis of materialism. And yet seeing these things, with open eyes, without extenuation or illusions, and recalling the noblest triumphs of the past, he may look forward with confidence, trusting that the nation which has carried its destiny thus far through the years will rouse itself, gird its loins, summon its powers of creative imagination, and advance inexorably upon the future. . . .

The future, at any rate, will advance inexorably on us. Dr. Beard's stock-taking, a useful work of reference to some, a handbook for the Exposition to others, will be most valuable if it teaches readers to face this future more intelligently.

Allan Nevins, Pulitzer Prize winner, is now editing the letters of Grover Cleveland for Fall publication.

## Days of the Queen

AT JOHN MURRAY'S: RECORDS OF A LITERARY CIRCLE. By George Paston. New York: E. P. Dutton. 1933.

Reviewed by JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

THROUGH this record of a rough hundred and fifty years of publishing there troop the men who believed in England, in England's wars, in England's might. The house of John Murray was tied up with the *Quarterly* which, so savage and tartly, killed John Keats, and the *Quarterly* was Tory, with all the consistency of real conviction. Similarly with the house of Murray, particularly so when John Murray III was in the editor's chair through the high Victorian years. Mr. George Paston, though he has no explicit point of view about the policy of the firm of John Murray, accepts the deeds, the decisions, the publications, of the house at face value; he simply presents letters, scraps of remembered conversation, bits of anecdote, as a Victorian publisher's reader would have unconsciously presented them. The whole ensemble lacks the independent life that a strongly prejudiced philosophical character such as Thomas Beer might give a similar publisher's chronicle, dipping it perforce in one strong coloring tincture, but the parts are galvanic in their own right. Obliquely, but steadily, we are treated in these pages to a review of the great days of England as they must have appeared to those who thought little of "whither."

The items about authors are interesting in themselves. John Murray III published a Home and Colonial Library, to entice the shillings of the new bourgeoisie growing rich as England became veined with railroads. It so happened that Herman Melville's "Typee" and "Omoo" were included in this library; but a section of the Victorian public found the books of the American "offensive to morals or good taste." John Murray did not publish "Moby Dick"; he refused to have any truck with fiction, and, unlike his father, who had made a small fortune publishing Byron in the Regency days, he also frowned on poetry. Travel, history, and serious literature were the Murray staples during the reign of the Queen.

One can watch the long-term fluctuations of the publishing business in this absorbing chronicle as one watches the pulse beats of a chicken's heart in a culture. In the hungry 'forties, days of the Chartist agitation, literature suffers—although "Jane Eyre" and "Vanity Fair" are published (not by Murray) and reviewed in Lockhart's *Quarterly*. The Crimean War comes and goes; John Forster writes his biographies; Disraeli's budget is ridiculed after Gladstone's speech. It is all very pleasant, leisurely gossip of small beer, this "At John Murray's."

# Why We Snarl at Our Friends

THE SECRET OF LAUGHTER. By Anthony M. Ludovici. New York: The Viking Press. 1933. \$1.75.

Reviewed by MAX EASTMAN

ABOUT once every twenty-five years somebody with an inferiority complex and a poor sense of humor has to rise up and announce that all laughter is egotistical and malicious. This has nothing to do with scientific progress; it is a mere diversion of the literary mind at its worst. Scientifically all these attempts to explain laughter away—to explain comic feeling by saying that it is something else—have been demoted and irrelevant ever since the Austrian psychologist, Theodor Lipps, pointed out that "the feeling of the comic is a feeling of the comic und weiter nichts."

Did the reader ever enjoy a feeling of sudden glory? Did he ever enjoy a comic feeling? If so, he knows without further argument that the comic is not a feeling of sudden glory.

Hobbes himself, inventor of that intriguing phrase, "sudden glory," was born scared and went through life in a state of

the ubiquitousness of the mood of humor, and the extravagant praise of it. He sees in this a sign that something is the matter with our serious life, and his book takes the form of a warning. In that I think he is right. When people try to extend the play attitude beyond its natural limits, their jokes are flippant or facetious, their humor rings false to a sound critic, there is something the matter with them. The essence of their malady, however, is not a proneness to snarling and showing of teeth, which would be a taking of life almost too seriously, but an excessive and too frequent resort to the play attitude—a sliding over the surface of life. The play attitude is the crucial thing here as elsewhere. Nobody who ignores it can possibly contribute to the scientific understanding of humor.

Mr. Ludovici makes some show of biological grounding by pointing out that the act of laughter reveals the teeth. He asserts that if instead of the word "laugh" we always use the words "show teeth," we shall find that this "explains everything." He then proceeds to remark that "animals show teeth, that is to say, they make a deliberate display of teeth, only when they

on the false assumption that animals snarl only when they feel superior.

That Aldous Huxley permits himself to be quoted on Mr. Ludovici's jacket to the effect that his is "the completely satisfying hypothesis" must be put down as one more evidence of the irresponsibility of the modern literary mind.

Max Eastman, who was for several years a member of the department of philosophy at Columbia University, is the author of "The Sense of Humor."

## Poets' Cafeteria

FIFTY POETS: AN AMERICAN AUTO-ANTHOLOGY. Edited by William Rose Benét. New York: Duffield & Green. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

POETS, declared not the least among them, are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, but this spangled testimonial does not of itself qualify them as competent self-critics. Self-criticism is as elusive a boon as self-knowledge; in a sense, the mere fact of being a poet is a denial of one's ability ever to acquire it. An occasional practitioner can warm his hands over a sacred flame of his own kindling and also appraise the phenomenon of combustion as exemplified in somebody else's fire; Matthew Arnold elaborated a recipe for translating Homer that is ingenious and convincing until one reaches Arnold's application of his own precepts.

This is the peril which Mr. Benét gallantly courted in asking fifty living American poets (one, Sara Teasdale, has since died) to select the one poem which each would choose to represent him "if posterity could know your work only by one single briefer poem." He requested also a recital of the reasons prompting the selections, and the replies are matters of interest and moment.

Here is an anthology which most of the anthologized have welcomed with heartiness. For Mr. Benét's plan presented them with an opportunity to offer to posterity (and to that much more responsive audience, the immediate forebears of the most proximate posterity) posies of their own culling and arranging in place of the wilted nosegays by which, no fault of theirs, they are celebrated in anthologies assembled by other hands. Louis Untermeyer is not represented by "Caliban in the Coal Mines" ("my 'Melody in F,' he calls it), or Robert Frost by "Mending Wall," or Edgar Lee Masters by "Anne Rutledge." "I know," declares the compiler himself, "how often they (i.e., poets) marvel that the anthologist selects some particular composition by which to represent them. I know how anthologists continue duplicating the same selections. Certain poems seem to become anthology stereotype. I know, as a poet, what an irritation this can be."

The reasons behind the choices are various. Some selections were made without hesitation; some were born of a laborious indecision, an honest lack of conviction. The plight recalls that general favorite of the anthologists of an earlier generation (who wrote it, and what was it called?) wherein the father and mother of an abundant and not too well fed progeny were faced with the prospect of letting the local capitalist adopt one child of their own choosing at a handsome rental:

"Which shall it be? Which shall it be?"  
I looked at John, John looked at me.

Some admit unqualified predilections but are unable to assign definite reasons, others not only know what they like but know why they like it. Mr. Benét asked each member of the group to append to the reasons for his choice "something concerning the circumstances under which it was written," and the number of poets who chose poems that were created in the Minervan mode is striking.

"Fifty Poets" embraces more than fifty years of creative activity. Here are Edwin Markham and Charles Erskine Scott Wood in their hale eighties, and here is George Dillon in his vivid twenties. The panorama of recent Hesperidean America is here in compact and eloquent compass.



THE JOKE (Etching by Julius Komjáti.—From Fine Prints of the Year, 1932.—Minton, Balch)

timorous diffidence which quite explains his overvaluing the derisive aspects of laughter. And Mr. Ludovici, the author of this latest defense of the derision theory, has somewhat the same type of mind, as appears in the fact that he thinks a joke is funnier in a foreign language than it is in his own—and this because of the "glory" involved in being able to understand it. No connoisseur in the flavors of comic emotion could possibly concur in this opinion. In a foreign language the very subtlest bouquets of this emotion are of necessity usually lacking. That Mr. Ludovici enjoys in a pun a feeling of personal triumph in the degrading of a noble word—and that even when he has not himself had the prowess to do the degrading, but merely listened to it—is further evidence of this trait of character.

I permit myself this *ad hominem* argument against Mr. Ludovici because he has employed a far shabbier mode of argument against me. In his second and third chapters he has given the gist of some fifty different theories of humor, all the way from Plato to Dr. Wrench. In these chapters he has thoughtfully refrained from summarizing my theory as presented in Part I of my book on the "Sense of Humor." There would be no crime in this, had he been so kind as to ignore me entirely. But in a subsequent chapter he wades heartily into my Part II—which is a criticism of other theories from the standpoint of mine—and attempts to make me appear "hopelessly muddled and incoherent" in a way which would be impossible had he presented even the scantest glimpse of my own theory.

The good thing about his book on "The Secret of Laughter" is his questioning of the healthiness and rightness of the too universal resort to laughter in these days,

wish to warn a fellow, a foe, or man, of the danger of pursuing certain tactics too far." This he calls an expression of "superior adaptation"—although the fact is that animals show teeth most often when they are brought into a corner by a power that they fear is superior. A world in which even the animals went around snarling whenever they felt superior would be a snarly world indeed. But at any rate, from this lop-sided assumption about animals Mr. Ludovici reasons that human beings also show their teeth in a somewhat "volatilized, spiritualized" manner in all those situations in which they "find or feel themselves superiorly adapted. . . ." When you realize that Mr. Ludovici is compelled in support of this theory to explain the smile with which we greet a friend as a volatilized snarl due to the fact that "every friend means an access of support, strength and good adaptation," you will see what a fantastic theory it is. Animals snarl at their enemies because they feel better adapted than they, and we snarl at our friends because the very support and strength which they bring us makes us feel well adapted!

The phrase "superior adaptation" is of course so vague—especially when it can be changed at will to "good adaptation"—that it applies to almost any person at any time who is not sick or in some sort of distress. Therefore it is possible for Mr. Ludovici, with only an average amount of casuistry, to show that this condition is present in a majority of the occasions when laughter occurs. It is indeed usually present when play occurs. He neglects to remark that it is also present in the most normal occasions when laughter does not occur—which of course makes his argument, if it can be called an argument, entirely valueless, even were it not founded



## The Saturday Review of Literature

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### A List for Revision

Last Winter Van Wyck Brooks put forth a "revised" edition of his dynamic "Ordeal of Mark Twain" that failed, in any important way, to take into account certain suggestions for alteration which, presumably, had great weight behind them, and which at least deserved Mr. Brooks's refutation. For example, Mr. Brooks repeated the statement that when all Europe was alive with prophets, crying out in the name of the human spirit against the oppression of growing industrial exploitation, America, the benighted, slept "the righteous sleep of its own manifest and peculiar destiny." Mr. Brooks had only to think of men like Henry George, Wendell Phillips, or the numerous theoreticians of the Granger movement, to know that he was guilty of overstatement. We had hoped for qualification of pronouncements like this, for "The Ordeal" deserved the best of its author.

Contemplation of the fate of "The Ordeal" leads a reviewer bent upon his fancy to a consideration of how he would have other books rewritten. The list will be haphazard, but the suggestions have been mulled over in the dark insomniac hours brought on by heavy reading. Let us begin with one of this year's Pulitzer Prize winners, the excellent "Grover Cleveland" of Allan Nevins. The contention of the insomniac is that Mr. Nevins has gotten his admiration for the quality of Cleveland's character all mixed up with "eternal principles," the "eternal principles" being those formulated by the Manchester economists a hundred and more years ago. As an historian, Mr. Nevins knows that the Aztecs, for example, did not live by the gospel of Adam Smith; ergo, the adjective "eternal" is malapropos.

Then there is John Strachey's bracing book, "The Coming Struggle for Power." Mr. Strachey excels as logician, but he makes one slip. He tells us there is no hope for parliamentary socialism, inasmuch as parliamentary socialist parties are committed to living off capitalist society, and hence anxious to preserve it. His call is for "revolutionary trade unions." But has it occurred to Mr. Strachey that trade unions, no less than parliamentary parties, live off capitalist trade? Mr. Strachey has called one knot Gordian, when both are Gordian. His revised edition, to satisfy the insomniac, must cut both knots.

Dorothy Dudley's "Forgotten Frontiers: Dreiser and the Land of the Free" needs extensive internal alterations if we are to

be pleased. For example, the mystic linking of Dreiser with Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams, whose common denominator quite escapes us, must be logically demonstrated or else dispensed with. The Coty, Black, Starr, and Frost phrases must, too, be eliminated; they do not belong in a book about the author of "Jennie Gerhardt." By now the insomniac's bile is flowing free, and he will proceed to play Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner, at quicker pace. Mark Sullivan (this is stated ex cathedra) must encounter Amos Pinchot's manuscript about the 1912 Progressive Party convention when he revises "Our Times: The War Begins." Sir Arthur Salter's new edition of "Recovery: The Second Effort" must specify, "Recovery of what?" Does he want to "recover" the system that led to a World War in 1914? Sinclair Lewis's new "Ann Vickers" must eradicate the bewildering shifts in auctorial point of view. In "The Liberation of American Literature," V. F. Calverton has bemoaned the "pessimism" which has overtaken many American writers. But if one is truly "liberated," is one not at liberty to be a pessimist? H. G. Wells's "The Bulpington of Blup" argues by implication that the scientific mind will keep us from wars. But who were the men and women to remain pacifist during the last war? Scientists like Bertrand Russell refused to countenance the battle, it is true, but just as many "esthetes" and true believers held out. Items: "esthete" Randolph Bourne, and "pastor" Norman Thomas in this country. And Storm Jameson of England, who has scarified the "scientific" Wells in a novel, is now one of Britain's ardent enlisters against war.

This insomniac could go on and on. He would like Bernard De Voto, for a last example, to explain why the Mississippi steam packet trade, so vicious in competition, was not "pioneering materialism" of the sort which Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford have complained about. But the column rules are limited. And our taste for authors' blood has at least been satiated for the moment.

### Rout of The Soul

It is a noteworthy fact that as interest in economic and international problems has grown, preoccupation with problems of personality has diminished. There has been a marked falling off in the past months in works on the springs of conduct and action. Part of this flagging of interest is due no doubt to the fact that the sensational value of Freudianism and psychoanalysis has been exhausted, and that fashion no longer demands babbling of "complexes" and "inhibitions." But more than this is the fact that the world has become so chaotic, the moment so confusing, that the problems of the individual, at least so far as they are spiritual and not practical, have become less dramatic and less charged with importance for himself than the composite fate of society. A very opposite psychology prevailed during the war years. Then the military necessity demanded the surrender of all initiative on the part of millions of men and the war spirit ironed out differences of opinion. For the time being the problems of society were fused in the common necessity of winning the war; to play freely, the thoughts of men had to turn inward. Then the conflict, which blotted out all independence of social thought, made a generation of explorers of the soul. Now the general confusion has discouraged introspection.



"OH, NO, I WORK. I'M A LAYMAN."

## To the Editor:

### In Defense of the Sentimental Journey

Letters are welcomed, but those discussing reviews will be favored for publication if limited to 200 words.

### A Preface to Travel

Sir: There is truth in what Mr. Schoonmaker says concerning travel books in your issue of June 17. Publishers should be on guard against errors and omissions in this type of literature. Sentiment and enthusiasm should not be allowed to coat inaccuracies or to stop the gap of omissions. It would be deplorable, however, if publishers should take his criticism so much to heart as to present for purchase to individuals and libraries only the scholarly and guide type of travel book. To strip travel of sentiment is to rob it of its basic urge. It is sentiment which oftenest sends the traveler forth, sentiment which makes him want to write about his experiences, and sentiment which makes the reader want to read even when he knows his chance for travel is nil.

No one but a librarian who deals with all kinds of readers knows the value of an introductory book on any subject. One such book is chosen, and through a synthesis of knowledge, peculiarly the librarian's, another and another, until a whole background is built up, authentic and real, and wide as the interest is wide. When the interest is travel, Laughlin, Green, and others against whom Mr. Schoonmaker lifts his voice, have often successfully played the introductory role. We had a patron, educated and alert, who brushed up on history through Clara Laughlin's books. An outline was made of things missed in history classes as each book was read, and thus motivated history reading followed the travel book. Who can say that Clara Laughlin in this instance had not stimulated creative reading? Sometimes even a mediocre book of travel starts a browser on his reading adventure. By all means give us the fruits of scholarship and research and the reactions of the minds of these scholars in sundry world settings, but leave us the books that lead to them, that make the common reader more aware of the world in which he lives.

MARY J. CAIN,  
Reader's Assistant, Public Library.  
Indianapolis, Ind.

### Planning for Whom?

Sir: It was undoubtedly a slip of Professor Beard's usually learned pen which made him state in his review of Sir Norman Angell's "From Chaos to Control" that "Communists are constantly saying that capitalism cannot plan, although a generation ago they were sure that capitalists were making the social order which labor was merely to 'take over' and operate." The communist position is, I believe, that capitalist countries can plan under duress, but the political result is Fascism. The fascist state, despite its "socialist" and "nationalist" pretensions, is simply capitalist planning and control for the benefit of capitalists and their middle-class dependents.

In the second half of his statement Pro-

fessor Beard confuses the Communist with the Socialist Party creed. There was no separate "Communist Party" a generation ago, and it was precisely on the point: whether capitalism could be taken over by peaceful parliamentary means, on which the left-wing Socialists (of which the Bolsheviks were the Russian representatives) split with the Social Democrats. The difference, therefore, between Sir Norman Angell and the communists is not: whether capitalism can plan, but rather, in whose interests and by whom the planning is to be done. The communist answer of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" may not be convincing, but it is clear and unmistakable.

GEORGE NOVACK.

Provincetown, Mass.

### You Do It, Mr. Riesenber

Sir: The Hundred Best Novels! There's a hatchful of merit for you. List 'em, and you list yourself. It is the easiest way to become mildly known. I have been on one of these lists with a book, so don't set me down as a neglected genius yelping for attention. I admire the list makers, applaud them, and urge them on. But why not a list of The Hundred Worst Novels? That would be a list to compile. It would require terrific labor and endurance. A thousand years from now the survivors may find some of the worst novels still going strong.

FELIX RIESENBERG.

New York City.

### A Coincidence

Sir: Mr. Morley's article, "Slack Away," which remarked how "agreeably the world is reticulated in longitudes of coincidence," was indeed the occasion of one of the most surprising coincidences I know. Just about one and one-half hours ago I stepped into a United Cigar store near the Rialto and, deciding to indulge myself, I bought a cigar instead of the usual pack of cigarettes. An hour ago I sat down to read the Bowling Green and, as is usual in such cases, forgot that a long-awaited enjoyment still lay in my pocket, wrapped in cellophane. Mr. Morley's article too quickly came to an end, and its last two words ("Robert Burns") brought instantly to my mind the image of the neglected Havana.

So let me thank him for postponing my cigar; for otherwise I should have finished half an hour ago the Robert Burns Panateta that I am still enjoying.

ARTHUR BOCK.

Long Island City, N. Y.

### The Unkindest Uncut of All

Sir: Mr. Lincoln Schuster's remarks on Merlin N. Hanson's advocacy of uncut pages bespeaks the pathology of a publisher. "Books are meant to be read," says Mr. Schuster. This view is bigoted and dogmatic. It takes no account of the prestige or decorative functions of sets, in filling shelves. It ignores wholly the collectors who have no intention of reading their first editions.

J. C. LONG.

Bethlehem, Pa.

## The Saturday Review recommends

### This Group of Current Books:

STRANGER'S RETURN. By PHIL STONG. Harcourt, Brace.  
Life with a difference on an Iowa farm.  
A CENTURY OF PROGRESS. Edited by CHARLES BEARD.  
Harpers. A symposium-survey of the 19th century.  
THE NAME AND THE NATURE OF POETRY. By A. E. HOUSMAN. A description of poetry.

### This Less Recent Book:

THE JOURNEY INWARD. By KURT HEUSER. Viking.  
A romance of physical and spiritual adventure.