

Points of View

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

Marlowe's Mighty Line

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: You ask, "Where are the poets who have been galvanized into excellence by poverty?" Well, classing the *Review* with the other leading periodicals, it seems accurate to say that the genuine poets are buried under your rejection slips, and the pseudo-poets are in your columns—so far as you condescend at all to a meager recognition of poets. The amount of critical attention you devote to poetry is remarkable when contrasted with the few and tiny portions of verse you print. Just as remarkable is the quality you favor. Your reviews indicate a deep interest in the real thing, while the specimens you print are all of the popular type of petty and gritty modernism.

JOHN MARLOWE.

Madison, Wis.

Plain Living

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: Your reviewer of Rose Wilder Lane's "Let the Hurricane Roar" claims that, though many readers will call the book "pleasing" and "delightful," it is not "impressive." Also, that "we have been taught to look for more graphic and incisive studies of Western life, more feeling and individuality than Mrs. Lane gets into her book." Also that it suffers in comparison with the works of Willa Cather and Hamlin Garland, and that it "somehow creates neither a definite locality nor individual characters." These conclusions seem unfair to another reader who finds the book, after two absorbed sessions, a great deal more than "a pleasing story." Many pioneer books give me, lifelong city dweller, the same feeling I remember when lecturers on child training would reproachfully bellow at their New York audiences because city mothers didn't move to the country to bring up children. We all squirmed, but most of us were helpless. Just so, there seems in many pioneer books an undercurrent of reproach to us pampered pups of the twentieth century. Our ancestors, they imply, didn't have electric beds and steamheated educations. Not so Mrs. Lane. She puts over her message of plain living in so compressed and telling a form, that I cannot understand how the most jaded or critical of reviewers would call the result anything but impressive.

SOPHIE L. GOLDSMITH.

New York City.

Tackling and Rigging

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: The reviewer of Emilie and George Romieu's "Life of George Eliot" quotes from the translation a passage in which the word "tackling" occurs, and then remarks: "Probably there is no such noun as 'tackling,' or if there is it doesn't mean rigging." It would seem that in 1611, at least, there was such a noun and that it then meant rigging. "Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail" (Isaiah xxxiii, 23). "And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship" (Acts xxvii, 19). Perhaps the reviewer meant to lay the emphasis on "is," as distinguished from "was." "Tackling" as a noun meaning "rigging" is found both in the "Century Dictionary" and in "Webster's International," but it must be admitted that the latter characterizes its use in this sense as "Obs. or R."

HAROLD S. DAVIS.

Boston, Mass.

They've Just Begun to Fight

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: The world is none the richer for the paltry polemics of Lewis Mumford and Bernard De Voto. Mr. De Voto seasoned his "Mark Twain's America" with pokes at the theorizing of Van Wyck Brooks. His book bids for greatness by ridiculing the "Ordeal of Mark Twain." Mr. Mumford comes along to chalk one up for the Brooks faction (inadvertently buttressing himself), declaring that were Mr. De Voto's marksmanship no more accurate than his reasoning, he would long ago have committed suicide.

Given intellectual problems of the first magnitude, with boundless room for originality, these men have preferred to vivisection what has already been discovered, to rear upon a modest book a superstructure of stodgy criticism. And they transform

their disbelief in one another's ideas into mutual enmity! Such a procedure begins and ends where it started from. It aims at where it is. If these men are capable of dispassionate judgment and original thinking, I counsel them to abandon their back-biting pedantry for the labor of true scholarship.

RICHARD E. VOLAND.

Cambridge, Mass.

Genuine Utterance

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: I was glad to see in your May 6 number that one writer has the courage to disapprove "The Fountain." I was more persistent than G. J. W., for I continued to the end of the book. I regard it as a loathsome work. It disappoints every high hope aroused by the first fifty pages. I could not help but suspect that some reviewers who rated it so highly did not actually read through it.

In awarding the Pulitzer prize to Stribling's "The Store," the judges honored a very strong novel—one which, in my opinion, deserves far higher praise than most of the reviewers gave to it. But with Christopher Morley I was hoping the award would go to Le Roy MacLeod's "The Years of Peace." This is one of the most genuine utterances of rural America ever presented. It deals with the valley of the Wabash in Indiana in a period soon after the Civil War, but it rings true for Maryland where I grew up a decade later. It speaks for the great border area from east to west and in large degree for the country in general.

CYRUS H. ESHLEMAN.

Ludington, Mich.

Art and Belief

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: If you will allow me to be blunt, I will say that a number of recent articles, including some editorials, in your journal on the general subject of the predicament of the artist—novelist, dramatist, poet—in our chaotic and revolutionary age, an age admittedly without religious faith, have seemed to me question-begging. Literary critics should know literary history much, much better than is indicated in those gloomy essays.

Without moral standards and guiding principles, we are told by many, without a profound *weltanschauung*, without sincere and courageous acceptance of—say—the class struggle, or the communist philosophy, the artist merely drifts, tries vain experiments, satisfies neither himself nor the intelligent element of his potential public. Now, it is demonstrable beyond a rational doubt that this is gratuitous nonsense.

An artist may do first-rate work in any field, whether he believes anything or not, provided he possesses requisite discipline and talent. Do you call for proof? Well, it is available in superabundance. What particular religious or high ethical principle underlies "Vanity Fair," "Madame Bovary," "The Egoist," for that matter, "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Don Quixote"? The business of the artist is to create character, as Mr. Mencken recently reminded the rebels. Character does not depend on the artist's beliefs. He deals with the beliefs, actions, professions, of his creatures. The artist must understand his characters, whether he likes them or not. The artist has ample material, since life is as rich as ever. You can paint crooked bankers, fanatical doctrinaires, unscrupulous lawyers, flighty women, arrogant and cruel men. You can paint communists and other insurgents, as Turgeniev did, without approving their doctrines. You can write "Strictly Dishonorable" without believing either in monogamy or in free love. You can write "Anna Christie" without entertaining definite beliefs regarding drink or prostitution. For guiding principles, there are always justice and humanity.

VICTOR S. YARROS.

Chicago, Ill.

Play-to or Ply-to?

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir: In his review of "Grand Canary," by A. J. Cronin, Basil Davenport wonders "Why does Plato always appear in the Irishman's speech as Playto?" Does your reviewer forget that Mr. Cronin is a Britisher? Isn't this spelling intended to represent the pronunciation in British with the first syllable pronounced as we might spell it, Ply-to—the long i sound to rhyme with pie?

CLARENCE STRATTON.

Cleveland, Ohio.

The New Books

Fiction

WIND IN THE EAST. By ANNA ROBESON BURR. Duffield & Green. 1933. \$2.

This is a pleasant, unpretending romantic novel, laid in the island of Rhodes, that almost unvisited land where Turks and Greeks and Italians live together among the relics of the classical civilization and the Crusaders' medieval, half-Oriental magnificence. To this island comes Jane Eden, an American girl by adoption and bringing-up, but of a parentage of which nothing is known except that it is foreign—and of course it turns out that she has some of ancient Rhodes in her blood. She has come to be secretary to a collector and man of letters, who has in his possession the manuscript of Byron's lost memoir, a tempting bait for thieves; and further, she meets and falls in love with a Greek-Irish adventurer who is planning a revolution against the Italian government.

There is if anything rather too much plot; the book is not so exciting as it tries to be, and the reason, one feels, is that the various threads of interest spoil one another's effect instead of reinforcing it. The value of the book, however, is the setting, and this is excellently depicted. The author makes great use of the medley of nationalities at the present time, and of the remains of civilization on civilization; her mere description of the place holy in a religion far older and more primitive than that of Zeus and Apollo is more breath-taking than all her carefully provided thrills of action and suspense. The novelty and richness of the scene are enough to make this a readable book for an idle afternoon.

TWENTIETH CENTURY SHORT STORIES. Edited by SYLVIA CHATFIELD BATES. Houghton Mifflin. 1933. \$2.25.

The making of short story anthologies is at best a thankless task, for while the anthologist is presumably convinced of the uniform excellence of his choice, his selection remains a matter of personal taste, and it is extremely unlikely that any majority of readers could ever be found whose personal taste would coincide with that of the anthologist. Miss Bates at least avoids presumption: "... the stories in this book are intended to be evidence of what can be done, because it has been done, in a fascinating medium becoming every day more elastic." Her title avoids the debatable word "best," the dangerous word "great." Grant her statement quoted above, and it cannot but be granted, and you will accept her book. Certainly it will provide more than two dollars and twenty-five cents worth of entertainment.

For criticism, again, is also a matter of personal taste, and if you grant the critic's standards, which is easy, and accept his ability to recognize those standards, which is difficult, you will accept his judgments. Hence a definition of terms is always necessary, though too infrequently made. This reviewer's personal taste leads him to these conclusions: that there are here represented three stories of superlative merit; stories that, through the combination of their material, their authors' sensitivity and ability to externalize their vision, are deeply revelatory of human character: Thomas Mann's "Disorder and Early Sorrow"; Lawrence's "The Captain's Doll," and Aldington's "At All Costs." This is a fair enough average for a volume of thirty-one stories, and the average is further raised by three stories of almost equal merit: Faulkner's "That Evening Sun Go Down," Kay Boyle's "The First Lover," and Coppard's "Fine Feathers." From that point the volume scales down through "good" and fair to downright poor, including stories by Anderson, Hemingway, Aiken, Zona Gale, William March, Pilniak, Frances Newman, Pirandello, and others. The range of material is wide and generally interesting, and the reader will inevitably make his own judgments.

SUNSET HARBOR. By CHARLES WHARTON STORK. Philadelphia: Roland Swain. 1933. \$2.

Dr. Stork, sometime professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, and well known as a translator, anthologist, and editor, and as a poet, makes his debut as a novelist with this tale, which, in his subtitle, he calls "a modern idyll." It is a smoothly efficient performance, in a manner somewhat outmoded but, perhaps, for many readers, none the worse

for that. It is a variation upon the theme of the good, but poor, young man, the rich, but rather bad, young man, and the girl with ideals who starts the trouble by engaging herself to the bad young man under the mistaken notion that she loves him. The evolution of the proper happy ending is well managed, with good dramatic effects. The tale is expressly dated a few years after the war, but its psychology, as a whole, seems to be that of a considerably earlier period.

PRELUDE TO DEPARTURE. By SYLVIA PAUL JERMAN. Harpers. 1933. \$2.

Despite a considerable amount of affectation, Mrs. Jerman's first novel shows undoubted promise. The mechanics of her story are often unnecessarily complicated, since the lives of the two principal characters are developed first together, then separately, and finally together again, with curious divagations from the normal chronological order of things. Yet the portrait of the fear-ridden Charles Moy-nihan is in the main successful, particularly in the scenes devoted to his childhood and youth, in which the author displays considerable power in recreating the mysterious and shadowy atmosphere of the formative period. After his marriage to the crippled Daisy Thornton, who is more conventionally drawn, the cloudiness of Mrs. Jerman's style and vagueness of her thought seem less appropriate. The narrative becomes involved and wandering before it comes to an abrupt though inevitable ending, in which Charles at last breaks away from his comfortable home life, and dares to live. While it cannot be said that "Prelude to Departure" is a good novel, it demonstrates clearly that much may be expected in the future from Mrs. Jerman if she cares to exercise her talents in less mannered ways, devoting them instead to a more definite narrative purpose.

THE LADIES' ROAD. By PAMELA HINKSON. Longmans, Green. 1933. \$2.

Under a harmless and amiable title Miss Hinkson has concealed the hard realities of another novel about the war. Her "Ladies' Road" is, in fact, the *Chemin des Dames* of bitter memory, and though there is little actual description of the front in her book, it permeates the whole story. The author seems to feel that the women of her Anglo-Irish group, all of whom lose some person to whom they are devoted, are as much victims of the struggle as if they had been killed in France. Her young people, Cynthia and Stella, David, Godfrey, and the others, are all profoundly affected from the time the delightful peace time atmosphere of their childhood is wiped out in August, 1914, though many of them are not directly involved until later. This change in their lives is the subject of the first part of Miss Hinkson's book. Then follows the "Home Front," accurately pictured, with the agony of waiting for news, the restlessness and discontent barely hidden beneath a patriotic demeanor. Finally the tragic aftermath, the return of the survivors to Ireland and the great disillusionment of the post-war period, brings the whole to a satisfactory if unusually gloomy close.

The author handles this chronicle of private lives in a great crisis with much restraint and evident sincerity of purpose. Her characters, particularly the women, are well drawn, consistent and fully alive. As a picture of the average man's war, an intensely small-scale affair of day to day anxieties almost more difficult to bear than actual tragedy, it has its value. In addition, Miss Hinkson writes of country life in England and Ireland charmingly, and especially well of that important adjunct to it,—the animals. Best of all, in spite of an ample display of feeling about it all she is not given to excessive sentiment or lurid explosions of hate. The war moves her, in fact, but only to a sort of desperate resignation. This makes it unlikely that her book will ever be seized upon by the sensation hunters or the anti-war propagandists, yet perhaps this very characteristic will ensure it a more valuable and enduring audience.

LOST. By DALE COLLINS. Bobbs-Merrill. 1933. \$2.

The mechanism of Mr. Collins's tale of shipwreck in the Antarctic may seem familiar at first glance, since he has consciously or unconsciously repeated many of the situations previously exploited by

(Continued on page 633)

This new novel by Josephine Herbst

DOROTHY CANFIELD

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JOHN COWPER POWYS

"Miss Herbst drives hard and straight into life; and there it is! This is one of the most profoundly American books it has ever been my lot to read. No modern American can afford to miss it."

HORACE GREGORY,

N. Y. Herald Tribune

"I believe that Josephine Herbst has written one of the most impressive novels published this season. She takes her place as one of the few American important women novelists."

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By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

ROUND ABOUT PARNASSUS

TWO recent books on poetry, addressed to the average reader and designed to create an interest in poetry for those who distrust it, are *DISCOVERING POETRY*, by Elizabeth Drew (Norton), and *PREFACE TO POETRY*, by Theodore Maynard (Century), the first written by a keen critic, the second by a practising Catholic poet. I can recommend them both to the layman who thinks he cannot understand poetry. Mr. Maynard's book is by far the longer, but not nearly so well arranged as the other. Miss Drew's I find an almost wholly admirable introduction to her subject. Miss Drew also takes up the most modern developments of poetry, in their proper place, with a clarity of exposition and a sanity of viewpoint that could hardly be bettered. Mr. Maynard touches little upon these matters, chiefly in "asides," though some of these shed light with their humor. I should advise the reading of Miss Drew's book first, to be followed by Mr. Maynard's more at one's leisure. An excellent feature of both books is that each quotes many poems. For, as Miss Drew says, in her preface:

It is only the reading of poetry which can teach the love of poetry, it is only the direct contact with the stuff itself.

Both books, therefore, give you "direct contact with the stuff itself," but they also lead you from one poem to another with illuminating comment. Miss Drew's manner of writing is rather less involved than Mr. Maynard's, and more truly analytical. It is also slightly more formal, though usually penetrating. In warning the reader against the entirely rational approach to poetry, she says:

Alternatively, the intellectual, rational approach to poetry is like tenseness and rigidity in muscular effort. It at once inhibits free coördination, causes a stasis in the nerve centres, and interferes with the harmonizing power which is struggling to work toward greater fullness of life.

Whereas Mr. Maynard is more concerned with warning the ordinary reader against trusting himself "as a kind of barometer in the case of poetry"

cancel your membership in the Gooseflesh Society. I mean—do not trust your personal reactions too much; do not suppose that because you happen to get a thrill out of a poem it must be good.

Both injunctions are needed. "It is easier still to read too emotionally," says Miss Drew herself. And she points out that

the more superficial the response it [poetry] asks for, the more easy it is to call it out. Commonplace poems about home, love, nature, children, sorrow, and silver linings are popular because all these things are the most familiar of stimuli, and there is a whole array of easy responses waiting on the threshold of our consciousness to respond at once to any of them.

DEAR ME, EMILY!

Again she says "Mediocre poetry of all kinds is popular simply because people are willing to let their taste remain mediocre, that is all." And that goes to the root of the matter. Both her and Mr. Maynard's books are endeavors to improve the average reader's taste by pointing out exactly why the good is good, why the bad is bad, and what poetry is and means. Their attitudes toward Emily Dickinson's definition of poetry "If I read a book . . . and I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry . . . is there any other way?" would seem, at first, to be different. Miss Drew muses, "Ultimately, perhaps, there is no other way of knowing. That is, poetry is a particular stimulus, which provides a certain kind of response in the right sort of reader. And the whole business of criticism is an effort to try and discover what the nature of that stimulus is, and what the nature of that response is, and what makes the right sort of reader." But Mr. Maynard says that all he could find to say at first was "Dear me, Emily!" And then announces flatly that there is another way. "And that is by testing of it by the intellect." As a matter of fact, however, Miss Drew herself expounds this matter elsewhere. So they do not differ fundamentally, after all.

MAKING A POEM

So far as the actual making of poetry goes, Miss Drew is excellent in analyzing

the writing of Keats's "Sonnet on Chapman's Homer," somewhat in Professor Lowes's manner, and Mr. Maynard is illuminating in quoting from Dorothy Wordsworth on the inception of Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" and "Stepping Westward," the former poem being acclaimed also by Miss Drew. Here we really grasp some of the loose material floating in the poet's consciousness that contributed to a particular act of literary creation.

Miss Drew shows the reader exactly why D. H. Lawrence's "Piano" is immeasurably superior to Eliza Cook's sentimental "The Old Arm Chair"; why the latter, enormously popular in its day, is in reality, very minor verse, while Lawrence produced true poetry. She also demonstrates why, beside Sir Thomas Wyatt's "They flee from me," Ernest Dowson's far-famed "Cynara" is actually mere "sensual excitement." But no less, in his Chapter XVI, does Mr. Maynard reveal the reasons for the badness of James Russell Lowell's "To a Dandelion" and of Oscar Wilde's "Ave Imperatrix." The fundamental fault of most of such poetry, as he points out, is its insincerity, which involves, in the case here of at least three accomplished technicians, all the other faults that crowd upon their poems.

THE HUMPTY-DUMPTY OF IT

To those who would grapple with the latest and most modern poetry, I recommend Miss Drew's chapter on modern expression versus the old idea of "communication." This has no counterpart in Mr. Maynard's book. But we live in an age of Relativity, and Miss Drew's explanation is important, as to what has happened to the poets in respect to it. Her use of Humpty Dumpty's language from "Alice in Wonderland" is cogent:

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

So says the modern poet in "private reaction to his private experience." The attitude is well analyzed. Miss Drew also comments upon some modern critics' "insistence on plausible reasons for not interpreting" some modern poems, "which cannot but rouse suspicions that the critic finds interpretation as difficult as the common reader." Then she quotes the explanation made to Harriet Monroe by the late Hart Crane of one of his cryptic poems, and refers to the complete lack of "key" to their work presented to us by

so many modern poets. However, this critic holds the scales even. She admits that a "special 'sense' for a new poetry, analogous to the 'road sense' which develops from the driving of a car, grows as the new forms and language lose their strangeness," and later on she shows clearly why the attempts at a new language in poetry, to express our own age, are being made.

IN A CHANGED UNIVERSE

Miss Drew avows that the "attitude of the sensitive man towards the place he holds in the universe has entirely changed." This Mr. Maynard, from the standpoint of an ancient established religion, cannot see, or if he sees it, feels to be only a temporary aberration. In reality it is a much more profound condition than that. There are certain aspects of our time for which we actually have no proper vocabulary as yet. I think it will surprise you to learn, top of page 169 of "Discovering Poetry," how many words Shakespeare used for the first time. His Elizabethan audience may easily have thought of him as a wild experimenter in language. Further, says Miss Drew:

It is even impossible for us today to gauge at all adequately the shock of "Lyrical Ballads" to the taste of its age, and the radical readjustment necessary to the original readers.

MAYNARD'S HUMOR

Mr. Maynard's book has one quality singular among books on poetry and of great relish. That is, its humor. Maynard is one of those fortunate beings whose truly devotional nature has not affected his keen sense of the ludicrous and his rich appreciation of all the lighter side of the poetic vocation, including parodies, good drinking songs, and the sprightliness of light verse. I should say that his taste at times, in serious poetry, is a bit too catholic—no pun intended. Miss Drew's is more eclectic and her instinct for the most distinguished verse is unerring. But Maynard's volume is a highly enjoyable one and he is a most companionable guide.

There is one direction in which I cannot go as far as does Miss Drew and that is, queerly enough, in the case of a Catholic poet. You might rather expect to find Mr. Maynard the enthusiast Miss Drew proves herself for the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Yet, as I have during my life had to do in a number of cases, I do somewhat recant the original pronouncements I made on Father Hopkins's work. One soon begins to realize what a great lot of subtle observation and thought is stuffed into the teeming lines.

The appendices to both books are of much interest. Maynard even furnishes a list of the places to sell poetry! One characteristic of modern books upon poetry is illustrated in each of these volumes—namely, the cavalier treatment of the dear, dry-as-dust old subject of prosody.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE CRIME CLUB GOLDEN BOOK OF BEST DETECTIVE STORIES (Crime Club: \$2.)	Reprinting complete novels by M. G. Eberhart, Rufus King, Anthony Berkeley; stories by H. C. Bailey, Edgar Wallace, and others.	A 1240-page birthday present for the Crime Club's fifth anniversary.	Your money's worth
THE ALBUM Mary Roberts Rinehart (Farrar & Rinehart: \$2)	Staid fronts of mansions in dignified residential park mask maelstrom of murders and sinister family secrets solved and uncovered by erratic amateur.	Far better in action, dialogue, typical Rinehart character studies and shivery My-gawd-what-next atmosphere than in deduction—but how much do you want?	N. P. Ultra
THE BROKEN MEN Val Gielgud (Houghton Mifflin: \$2)	Conservative coterie who would destroy European democracy to bring back pre-war pomp and color runs afoul British secret service.	Intrigue à la Oppenheim with clever girl and bull-headed Briton as leading spirits, four very likable villains, and romantic German setting.	Readable
BLOOD ON THE COMMON Anne Fuller and Marcus Allen (Dutton: \$2)	Unknown found dead in New England village starts tide of accusations and deductive functions of newspaper-man.	Bad let-down at end mitigated by interesting village atmosphere—including viperish town-gossip, who gets throat cut, rapacious Deacon out of H. Alger—and much action.	Fair
THE EMERALD CLASP Francis Beeding (Little Brown: \$2)	Discovery in husband's desk of jewelry belonging to girl-friend who had apparently killed herself starts bride thinking—just in time.	Cold blooded villainy in France and England and excellent characterizations, especially female, put this tale above average. No detectives present.	Very good