

Always a Maverick

ALWAYS A GRAND DUKE. By ALEXANDER, GRAND DUKE OF RUSSIA. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1933. \$3.

IN speaking of the tragi-comedy which his handsome cousin, the Grand Duke Cyril, plays in his present "Capital of Russia," the village of St. Briac in Brittany, the Grand Duke Alexander asks what may be the matter with the man. Is he a maniac, a superannuated visionary, a pitiful somnambulist?

The answer is "no." In fact, the explanation is quite simple. It so happens that Grand Duke Cyril is the first in line of succession to the throne of Russia while I myself am fortunately the tenth. Therefore, I may write books and articles, play contract and backgammon, attend cocktail parties and greyhound races, travel, and have an all-around good time, but he must keep the Monarchistic Idea burning.

It is this more than liberated royalist, a man not only cut off by fate from his own past but rather more than willing to burn his own bridges behind him, to whose sprightly, cynical gossip and at once amusing and rather macabre adventures, we listen in this last posthumous narrative, as we have already listened in "Once a Grand Duke" and "Twilight of Royalty." This book is as lively and engrossing as its predecessor of similar title, and superior to the shallow "Twilight of Royalty."

"Always a maverick," the Grand Duke remarks of himself in one passage, and some such characterization seems called for to account for the breezy ruthlessness with which he always seems ready to throw overboard, not only the impedimenta, but what might appear to be the more permanent cargo of his old life. In speaking of the emigrés' wrangle about the "recovery" of Russia, meaning thereby that "the grand dukes, the bankers, and the generals would return to St. Petersburg and resume their occupancy of palaces, the Stock Exchange, and the Guards' Barracks," he says that he never took part "in these arguments for the that I would not have taken Russia as a gift. I was through monarchistic, communistic, and I hoped to God I would never lay my eyes on St. Petersburg again."

When the newspaper carrying the story of the execution of four Russian grand dukes, two his brothers and two his cousins, was placed at his breakfast table in the Hotel Ritz in Paris in 1919, the maître d'hôtel suggested that possibly Monseigneur would prefer to have his breakfast served upstairs. Instead, Alexander stayed where he was, slowly buttering his toast and sipping his coffee under the astonished eyes of the whole dining-room. And that evening he went to a dinner-party. "There would have been no point," he writes, "in explaining that no firing squad can extinguish that spark of immortal energy and eternal human effort which was known to me as the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovich of Russia." A fiery hatred of bunk and pose of any sort seems to have been a part of Alexander's character, and he would risk seeming brutal or "cheap," as he does many times in the books with which he helped to keep his head above water during his last years, rather than yield to what the crowd expected of him.

The present volume begins with Alexander's rescue from Russia by a British cruiser in 1919, and follows his extraordinary adventures down to his return from America to the Côte d'Azur in 1931.

The book is always entertaining, and even when its author exasperates, one cannot deny his verve, his extraordinary adaptability, and cantankerous courage.

Processional

THEY BROUGHT THEIR WOMEN. By EDNA FERBER. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

MISS FERBER'S keen and precise powers of observation and ability to isolate and select significant detail make her an adroit writer of the short story. She catches the very tempo and accent of daily life and reflects its habiliments with so nice a truthfulness that background and figures start from her pages with amazing fidelity to fact. "They Brought Their Women," which contains eight short stories, though it throws into high relief her limitations, exemplifies all her virtues. Whether she is depicting the crowded day of a successful actress or the lonely one of a country milliner transplanted to the great city, or whether she is concerned with the private life of a children's nurse or the haphazard experiences of a taxi-driver, she is alike adept in conveying the minutiae of setting and in reproducing the dialogue of differing social groups.

Her art lends itself excellently to such a tale, for instance, as "Hey! Taxi!" with its kaleidoscopic portrayal of the passing scene, or to "Glamour," in which the



Courtesy of Nicholas Murray.
EDNA FERBER.

successive incidents are projected against a minutely detailed background. If it is less successful in such tales as "Meadow Lark" and "No Foolin'," that is because their emotional undertones are of more importance than externals, and externals, not emotions, are Miss Ferber's forte.

Superficially these stories are all that could be desired. They are neat, compact, skilful; they move rapidly, advance with utmost economy of means, and end with a snap. But clever, amusing, poignant as they are at times, they have little originality of theme and small psychological subtlety. Miss Ferber skims the surface of life rather than penetrates to the springs of action, and concerns herself with manners rather than with the complications and entanglements of human relationship. Her tales are excellent magazine fiction, excellent idle hour reading, but because they deal with superficialities and not with fundamentals their effectiveness is of the moment only. We have just a suspicion that Miss Ferber, and not the short story as such, is to blame for that.



IN WORDSWORTH'S LAKE REGION.

A Poet Ruined by Remorse

THE LOST LEADER: A Study of Wordsworth. By HUGH JANSON FAUSSET. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1933. \$3.

Reviewed by GEORGE MACLEAN HARPER

LIKE radium, the influence of great poetry goes forth perpetually and in various forms, while the substance remains essentially undiminished. Great poetry, the very greatest, may be freshly interpreted, age after age, and may even yield meanings never dreamed of by those who wrote it. Euripides, for example, could not foresee that Professor Gilbert Murray would make of his tragedy "The Trojan Women" a vital commentary on the horrors of war in the twentieth century. No more striking illustration of the inexhaustible nature of great poetry could be imagined than Mr. Fausset furnishes in this profound interpretation of the life and works of Wordsworth. While not altogether new, it is original, because it is the outcome of intense absorption, extensive knowledge, and profound conviction. However sceptical one may be of biographical studies that arrange the heterogeneous facts of a person's life to support a theory or exemplify a philosophy, there is no denying their effectiveness, if they are made honestly and not merely to attract attention. Mr. Fausset is obviously sincere and also competent. Whether his enthusiasm has not forced his facts into an unreal consistency, it is my purpose to consider.

Since the publication, in 1896, of M. Legouis's "La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth" a whole generation of scholars have been making their contributions towards solving the two problems of the poet's life and art; namely, what were the sources of his creative power in early years, and what the causes of his decline into a relatively uninspired phase. Among the most recent of these studies are M. Legouis's "William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon," 1922, Mr. H. W. Garrod's Oxford lectures in 1923, Professor Arthur Beatty's investigation of the influence of Hartley's psychology upon the poet, 1924, the late C. H. Herford's "Wordsworth," 1930, Mr. Herbert Read's "Wordsworth," 1931, and several articles by Professor MacGillivray, Newton P. Stallknecht, O. J. Campbell and Paul Mueschke. Mr. Fausset uses the material furnished in these and other works, especially Mr. Beatty's, and yet maintains his independence of all secondary sources, his chief reliance being upon the poet's writings and the known facts of his life. He probes deeper than anyone ever has done before, and his audacity excites both admiration and misgiving. His undertaking was full of pitfalls, but the stride of his conviction is so firm and his learning carries so much weight that he comes through fairly triumphant, in spite of several tumbles.

One of these pitfalls was the temptation to write fiction. This he has in the main avoided, for though he seldom mentions his authorities, he knows his ground. He

has also escaped the morass of physiological psychology. He is scrupulous in his search for authentic biographical facts, though sometimes too fanciful in his inferences. But with the poems he often deals arbitrarily, to make them suit his purpose, being positive where he should have admitted the possibility or even probability of doubt. He scrutinizes Wordsworth's long life and the vast body of his verse and prose with a determination to find support for a particular theory. Back of this theory about Wordsworth lies Mr. Fausset's own philosophy. This latter is very noble, and with it I have no fault to find. It is with the theory that we are concerned.

The theory is that Wordsworth in childhood and youth was integral, a seer at peace with itself and furthermore in a state of union with nature, doing the will of God without question or difficulty, and thus attaining heights of poetic vision; that, however, his unwise obedience to a natural but sinful impulse when he was the lover of Annette Vallon revealed to him a flaw in nature and in himself, made him remorseful and timid, and caused him to build up and maintain for the rest of his life a system of defense against the torture of conscience and the censure of the world.

This theory assumes so many phases in the course of Mr. Fausset's 447 pages that the above statement of it is necessarily too simple. He subjects the acts and words of the poet to an over-subtle analysis. He regrets that Wordsworth did not, throughout his life, remain "a true mystic," surrendering himself, as he had done sometimes in his boyhood, to currents of emotion deeper than his conscious self. His regret causes Mr. Fausset to undervalue Wordsworth's realism. Blake, who at his best was a realist and at his worst a mystic, said truly "every Minute Particular is holy"; and Coleridge, enumerating the qualities of the poetic mind, included "delight in little things." Though Wordsworth in boyhood and youth had moments when he felt as if he were joined to the totality of life in some ecstatic union, and though this mood recurred at times later, as we know, for example, from the "Lines composed above Tintern Abbey," there is no warrant for assuming that these trances of the mind were more heaven-born than the gift of observation and the gift of reflection which filled the long intervals with matter for poems of a less famous perhaps, but no less characteristic, kind. The wild animal spirits of a boy, when compared with a man's duller processes of enjoyment and less spontaneous modes of expression, are not necessarily more authentic testimonies of union with life.

According to Mr. Fausset, Wordsworth failed to remain "a true mystic" chiefly because the integrity of his life was broken by his fatal connection with Annette. In trying to prove this he sees her in poems where no one has seen her be-

The Saturday Review Recommends

This Group of Current Books:

THE MEANS TO PROSPERITY. By JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES. Harcourt, Brace.

A pamphlet pointing toward the World Economic Conference in June.

MAN WANTS BUT LITTLE. By WILSON WRIGHT. Boni.

A red-blooded story of Cuba.

A JUDGE TAKES THE STAND. By JOSEPH N. ULMAN. Knopf.

A Baltimore judge's explanation of the daily processes of the law, written for the layman.

This Less Recent Book:

THE TIME OF MAN. By ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS. Viking.

A tale of the Southern mountaineers, at once realistic and poetic.

fore and where she probably has never been. A biographer, knowing how tempting it is to build up theories and also aware of the limitations imposed by evidence, must inevitably feel sceptical when he reads, for example, that Dorothy Wordsworth was the primary and Annette Vallan the secondary inspiration of the poem "Ruth." No doubt it is the prerogative of a sensitive and intelligent reader to see in poetry more than meets the eye, as it is the virtue of great poetry to contain infinite varieties of meaning destined to be unfolded successively with the lapse of time and change of taste and fresh needs of men. But, to take another example, Mr. Fausset violates several probabilities when he contends—and he does contend dogmatically—that the mysterious subject of those exquisite five so-called "Lucy" poems is a combination of Annette and Dorothy. This is too fantastic. Wordsworth never, in his most characteristic or most inspired poems, worked in an element removed from actuality and was not capable of putting together such a monster, *undique collatis membris*.

Yet it must be admitted that Mr. Fausset discovers several instances of probable allegory suggested by the memory of Annette. No doubt the young poet, during his residence in France in 1792, lost not only innocence but the strength and the peace of mind that innocence confers. No doubt this was one cause of those self-tormenting investigations of right and wrong which resulted, several years later, in his yielding up moral questions in despair and seeking to find once more in nature the guide, the guardian of his heart and soul of all his moral being. In examining this interaction between moral conflict and spontaneous joy, Mr. Fausset is brilliantly successful, until he passes beyond the year 1798, by which time that particular phase of the strife was nearly over. Then new problems faced the poet and new powers were conferred upon him. Of these Mr. Fausset takes too little account. He applies his formula of remorse and defense-mechanism to the half-century of life in which political, economic, and domestic motives came more and more into play. That they affected the later Wordsworth disastrously there is no denying. As Mr. Fausset well says: "He inevitably gravitated to the timid and negative Tory side, sharing its panic, its concern for rights and privileges, its anxiety to preserve the past as long as it could against the inroads of the future." He acquiesced in the acquisitiveness and the militarism of an age which rejected the Revolutionary belief "in reason and the perfectability of man, the conception that both nations and individuals should serve as members of one harmonious society." He failed to "foresee how fatal war was to prove in an industrialized and mechanized world." Had he been true to himself by forgetting himself, had he scorned his fears, had he preserved the generous human sympathies of his youth, he might have diverted the course of history into happier channels. This is the second part of Mr. Fausset's thesis, which he has developed with persuasiveness.

George MacLean Harper, who has recently retired from Princeton University, is one of the outstanding authorities on Wordsworth in this country.

The Pulitzer Prize committee, in honoring Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of Sections in American History" (Henry Holt), honored the force making for vitality in their other 1932 choices. T. S. Stribling's "The Store" (Doubleday, Doran) is a sectional novel about the south; its drama is multiplied by currents which produced the Civil War. Allan Nevins's "Grover Cleveland" (Dodd, Mead) revels in regional detail; it is a history of Buffalo and northern New York State for the Gilded Age, as well as a biography. Archibald MacLeish's "Conquistador" (Houghton Mifflin) turns back to our origins as a continental dwelling place for various European strains. Maxwell Anderson's "Both Your Houses" (Samuel French) alone escapes sectional influence. But he proclaims a pox on the Federal government's impotence because sectional differences prevent the expression of any disinterested national will.

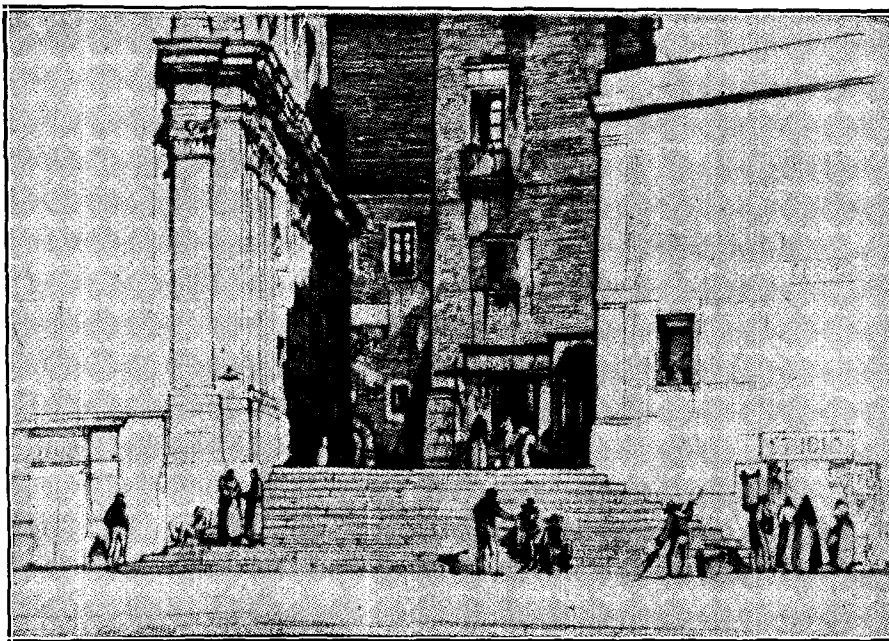
Mr. Douglas At Home

(Continued from first page)

never see again." His book is thus, in a sense, a kind of catalogue raisonné of the men and women (mostly women) he has known, but arranged quite regardless of chronological order. Yet in telling of these people he reveals himself, and the reader is thus placed in a position to build up for himself the living Douglas as a boy, as a young man, and as what he is now as a ripened citizen of the world. To accomplish this in the Douglas manner that "emphasis on individuality" impressed on him by his early friend, Professor Leydig of Wurzburg, was demanded. The admonition, which he took to heart, supplied him with "a formula for avoiding those flat lands of life where men absorb each other's habits and opinion to such an extent that nothing is left save a herd of flurried automata." Certainly Douglas is no flurried automaton. From another friend, Le Comte Campo Alegre, he learned another lesson, "that life was too short for anything but the best." The Comte had "taken life by the throat in many lands and it yielded every pleasure, legitimate or otherwise, which it had to offer." He scorned the civilized attitude.

was an attaché there. I am wondering if this is the same Esterhazy I knew in London. My Esterhazy was the villain in the Dreyfus Case, and a character. We got on very well together despite the fact that I couldn't speak his French and he couldn't speak my English. But I understood him and he understood me after I had bought a French dictionary of argot. His appellation for the publisher, for whom I was then reader, still rings in mine ancient ear and would tickle even Douglas's Edmund Barton, Corvo's last companion in his miserable poverty; but it is unprintable.

Ah, yes, Baron Corvo was a phenomenon, but he was his own worst enemy. I knew him well and I agree with every word Norman Douglas writes of him. But he has passed on so let him rest in peace—if he can. I regret Douglas's dismissal of Frederic Chapman with a mere name; but perhaps he did not know this brain of the Bodley Head. I can assure him that he was a great-hearted gentleman with a real mind in whose company Douglas would have found God's plenty. "Frankie" Harris of course could not be omitted from Douglas's gallery and his etching of him is to the life—a Balkan conspirator and a swashbuckler "with a reverence for all



SAN STEFANO, CAPRI.

From an Etching by Louis C. Rosenberg ("Fine Prints of the Year 1932," Minton, Balch).

"Your vulgarian," he told Douglas, "cannot achieve this point of view. For all his effrontery he is a slave—a slave to his own poor soul, to a thousand prejudices and taboos." If Douglas's book proves anything it proves to a demonstration that its writer is not that kind of a vulgarian.

As I was reading this fascinating autobiographical excursion I was continually being transported into an Elizabethan day. I seemed to be reading a modern Hakluyt. For here is a man of that same reckless, adventurous spirit with whom it is a delight to travel anywhere and everywhere. I could well believe that this reincarnated son of the Renaissance would have chortled with glee to play that practical joke the dramatist Shakespeare is reported to have played on Richard Burbage, the actor. There is in this man a gusto for life and a spirit of gladness to abandon to it as well as a generous acceptance of its offerings which are rejuvenating and enhancing in their virility.

Among the many hundreds of people here revitalized I knew but a few, but the portraits here presented of these are so in accord with my own experiences of them that I am quite willing to take the rest for granted. I should have enjoyed meeting Maestro Vincenzo, that deft and gentle mason, who partly built Douglas's house in Capri but was unhappily prevented from finishing his job by being arrested for double murder. Poor devil, he liked girls, "but they make one suffer," he said. Alas, *la libidine ha non fine*. Mrs. Annie Bertram Webb, the New England lady, is another strange piece of humanity that must have been an experience to know; but, I protest, she deserved a larger charity of treatment, for her heart could be beneficently moved. An Esterhazy is mentioned, the Secretary to the French Embassy in St. Petersburg when Douglas

that is admirable in art or literature." Of D. H. Lawrence Douglas furnishes the only sane estimate of the man I have yet read. The sketch of Rupert Brooke is worth reprinting:—

Brooke a vertebrate. His was a positive gift, a yea-saying to life—the poet's first requisite. The animal in him was not atrophied, as in so many of us. He was assimilative and zestful, unafraid of realities, responsive to phenomena. The spoilt-darling phase was nearing its end when he died in Tris Boukes Bay.

"Life and death are in the hands of the tongue," is a saying of the Jewish rabbis. In Norman Douglas's hands there is life abundant.

Platitudes

(Continued from first page)

platitude, nothing remains the same thing so much as change, and in between starvation on the one hand and death by violence on the other, the chief desires and sorrows of the human race go on pretty much the same in crisis and out of it. On the whole, there is more to be learned of current truth in Plato, Samuel Butler, and Emerson (a frightful platitude) than in *The Saturday Evening Post*, and much more likelihood that the male described by Fielding and the female depicted by Stendhal will be recognizable in 2033 than that the prophecies everyone is peddling will ever come near enough the future to be worth remembering. Have your world as in your time, by all means, but don't forget (a platitude) that life goes on, and has been a long time going, which is something that the really good books were written to record.

Mr. Canby, who will be abroad for the next few months, will write an occasional editorial only. The remainder, until after Labor Day, will be written by other members of the Editorial Staff.

BOOKS IN THE NEWS

ON the afternoon of May 2, in Yorkville Court, Don Quixote Sumner of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice opened his latest battle against the windmills of the "lewd, lascivious, and indecent" in literature. The book that had aroused his ire, and his concern for the morals of thousands who never read books, anyway, was "God's Little Acre," by Erskine Caldwell, a tall tale of some never-never land which the author specifies as being Georgia (Viking, Publisher).

It must be said that Mr. Sumner did not show to advantage. Magistrate Benjamin Greenspan listened patiently to the charge that Mr. Caldwell's book was pornography, asked just whom Sumner represented, dipped interestedly into "God's Little Acre" when it was placed in evidence, permitted Wolfgang Schwabacher, attorney for the Viking Press, to read a list of the highly reputable Viking authors (including Alfred E. Smith and Rabbi Wise), and announced that His Honor must reserve decision until May 23 if he was going perforce into the business of literary criticism. When Mr. Schwabacher likened John S. Sumner to Hitler in Germany, the Magistrate chuckled. "You wouldn't compare him to Hitler," he remonstrated, "surely he can't be as bad as that." But Mr. Schwabacher couldn't be dissuaded; Sumner was a Hitler, that was all there was to it. The assembled taxi-drivers, bootleggers, and night club proprietors, waiting their turn before the Magistrate, thoroughly enjoyed the proceedings. They, too, had come into contact with repressive measures (sired by Volstead, not Sumner), and they grinned at the solemn Sumner's discomfiture.

Caldwell himself, Maxim Lieber, his literary agent, Marshall Best and Ben Huebsch of the Viking Press, and other devotees of belles lettres, were in the crowd, straining to catch the overtones from beyond the railing where Sumner was standing, hands behind his back. A joke to the taxi-drivers, the hearing was serious enough to them. A decision in favor of the Vice Society might set an unholy precedent that would catch more than one author and publisher. Caldwell looked perturbed until the Magistrate gave evidence of having a sense of humor. But the author of "God's Little Acre" expressed delight when someone, on leaving the court, referred to Sumner as "God's Little Belly Acher." That was quite in the spirit of Mr. Caldwell's own humor in "Tobacco Road" and other fables, including the book under Sumner's fire.

"As a day of commemoration April 23 is getting too crowded for comfort," says the *London Observer*. "Even when it was shared between Shakespeare and St. George it was full enough, and as the two cults have extended the jostling has been severe. The 23rd is also the day of Wordsworth's death (1850), but the public cannot in reason be expected to remember two poets in one day. A doubtful claimant is Cervantes, who died on the same date as Shakespeare, though not on the same day: a paradox which resolves itself when one remembers calendar differences."

The Saturday Review of Literature

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY Editor
NOBLE A. CATHCART Publisher
AMY LOVEMAN Associate Editor
JOHN CHAMBERLAIN Assistant Editor
WILLIAM ROSE BENET } Contributing Editors
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY }

Published weekly by The Saturday Review Co., Inc., 25 W. 45th St., New York, N. Y.
Noble A. Cathcart, President and Treasurer; Henry Seidel Canby, Vice-President and Chairman; Amy Loveman, Secretary.
Subscription rates per year, postpaid in the U. S. and Pan-American Postal Union, \$3.50; in Canada, \$5; in Great Britain, 18 shillings; elsewhere \$4.50. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 1, 1879. Vol. 9. No. 43.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW is indexed in the "Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature."

THE SATURDAY REVIEW cannot assume responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts submitted without an addressed envelope and the necessary postage.

Copyright, 1933, Saturday Review Co., Inc.