

The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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

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. 10. No. 19.

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

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Farewell to Youth

When the dust settled over the disasters of 1914-1918 and the predatory conflicts of 1918-1920, youth came into its own. For a while the air was vibrant with attacks on the "wicked old men" who had begun the war and wrecked the peace. Power in the future was to pass to youth; the word was given to youth and youth grabbed at it. Perhaps the emphasis which psychology had been throwing upon the importance of childhood was partly responsible; perhaps the disillusion of the mature with their own maturity was partly responsible; certainly the futile tragedy of the war called upon the next generation for action, and by 1920 youth had the attention of a world audience as perhaps never before in history.

In America the strongholds of literature capitulated. Periodicals in which no one under thirty had ever arrived except by accident sought contributions from undergraduates upon the state of youthful complexes. Publishing houses where the doorman had handled youthful literary aspirants now specialized in books by unknown authors, whose first claim upon attention was that they were just out of their teens. Scott Fitzgerald wrote "This Side of Paradise."

Abroad, the "youth movement" flourished, the avowed intentions of which were to further international friendships and create a world sympathy among a new generation that did not propose to be ruined by the muddled prejudices and greeds of the world that had made the war. Life was to be healthier, more liberal, less predatory, and suffused with the hope, the friendliness, and the hearty energy of youth. Since the war had failed to end war, youth would do it. Youth of the Balkans fraternized with youth of Germany. Youth from America visited all over Europe. Youth of England preached apocalyptic internationalism throughout the world, except in Russia, where the energy of youth had already been canalized for a great experiment, which was friendly only in one direction.

Now, in 1933, when international relations are probably worse than at any period since 1919, when friendliness between nations has slackened to the vanishing point, when it is every fellow for himself again and the devil take the hindmost to arm, when autocracy, the regulating of opinion, the negation of personal freedom, are cried up, when everything that youth throughout the ages has traditionally rebelled against is in fashion, and all that youth has traditionally fought for is cried down, it is well to examine the conduct of youth in a decade when it has had the center of the stage.

The result of such a survey is disillusion. In American literature, the youngsters who were acclaimed because they were young and because youth alone knew what was what, are middle-aged and second-rate or sunk altogether. William Faulkner, who was preternaturally old when he was young, is still among the promising. So is Hemingway, who still writes like a youth, with the youth's virtue of candor, youth's defect of monotony, and youth's vice of unrestraint. We have

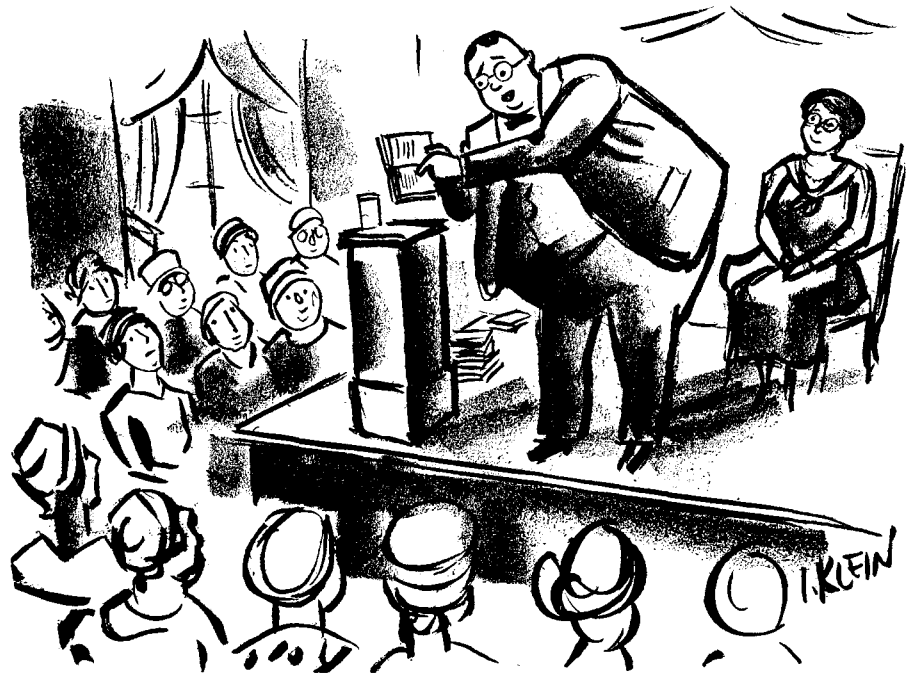
had no successors in poetry to Vachel Lindsay, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elinor Wylie, except Stephen Benét and Archibald MacLeish. There are no successors to Willa Cather, Edith Wharton, Booth Tarkington, Ellen Glasgow with anything like their volume of sustained achievement. And yet it has been fifteen years since youth took control.

Europe displays the extraordinary and unhappy phenomenon of a debacle of the youth movement as bad as the ending of the most unfortunate crusade. The youths of the early twenties, who were going to remake Western Europe, have sunk into middle age without a trace. Their immediate successors, the youths of the late nineteen twenties and early nineteen thirties, have in the wide Teutonic region joined a party whose average age is theirs, have gained, indeed, that authority over their elders which those who hoped to get rid of "the wicked old men" prophesied—but in seizing central Europe they have thrown overboard every other ideal of the flaming, enthusiastic youth of 1920. They have thrown overboard also the great liberal heritage of the nineteenth century which generations of youths before them fought to gain. They have given up the right to opinion, the right to think clearly, the right to protest against mastery by force, the right to call their souls their own. They have swallowed, whole, masses of contradictory ideology which would have nauseated the eighteenth century; in order to regain their self-respect after a military defeat and unjust political oppression they have accepted demagogues, and, so far as one can tell from published reports, lent themselves freely to a campaign for another war while naively believing the statements of their leaders that only peace is intended.

The reign of youth in literature in the U. S. A. has undoubtedly accomplished something. It has encouraged frankness, which would probably have come anyway. It has opened areas of life for literary exploitation in fiction and drama to writers of an age best able to make them realistic, though not necessarily or probably best able to interpret them. But the reasoned verdict of 1933 must be that it was an interregnum. The elders carried on. The future does not belong to the generation that was given an unprecedented opportunity.

As for Europe and its hot spot of politics in Germany, no observer here can view with anything but dismay the spectacle of the easily gained confidence of youth, enlisted, inspired, intoxicated by the most skilful propagandists of our time for the recreation of a great people by ideals which we had thought safely dead and buried. The situation is really worse than this, for if the Hitler ideals were all bad, if he were merely a Prussian tyrant, escape would come with his first defeat. But unhappily the Nazi philosophy, in so far as it has been exposed, is a melange of socialism, Italian fascism, communist conceptions of education and a minority dictatorship, military autocracy, and the modern Machiavellianism of bunk—and all of this the youth of Germany, and many of the youths of Austria, Switzerland, Holland, and elsewhere, have swallowed in a gulp, like the ideas in a lecture course by a popular professor.

There were "wicked old men," and a state or a philosophy or an economic organism dominated by old men and idealized by old women is a menace. But which is preferable, the fossil conventions of the old, their corruptions, their self-seeking, or the raw enthusiasms of youth, their lack of foresight, and their reliance upon noise and brute strength? The answer, of course, is neither, and indeed, when the dust settles again after the present conflict, it will be evident that one of the most dangerous results of the war and of the post-war dislocations was this split between generations which has forced the world to take sides either with age or with youth. The old men began this era of discord. It seems that youth will be responsible for the next. Such is the karma that pursues the attempt to free energy from deliberation, and to make a new world, either in literature or politics, in ignorance or contempt of the past. H. S. C.



"I THREW MY ENTIRE BEING INTO THIS ONE SHORT PHRASE."

To the Editor: A Stephen Crane Discovery

The Death of Stephen Crane

Sir: The thorough and definitive biography of Stephen Crane remains to be written; nor shall we see such a book until a number of precincts have been heard from. In 1923 Thomas Beer's serious study of Crane appeared, the best critical and impartial portrait to date. But in spite of Mr. Beer's personal researches and his clearing away of the mythology of gossip hovering about certain interludes in Crane's career, the factual outline of his life remains comparatively slight. The following letter, which I rescue from the files of the *New York Herald*, ought to be of interest to admirers and students of Crane and of service to the future biographer who aims at exhaustive and scholarly treatment. The letter, which has escaped Crane's biographers and bibliographers, was written by Robert Barr, one of Crane's closest friends, and appeared in the *Herald*, June 21, 1900. It is dated June 8, 1900, and was written from Hillhead, Woldingham, Surrey; the original recipient is unknown.

I was delighted to hear from you, and was much interested to see the article on Stephen Crane you sent me. It seems to me the harsh judgment of an unappreciative, commonplace person on a man of genius. Stephen had many qualities which lent themselves to misapprehension, but at the core he was the finest of men, generous to a fault, with something of the old time recklessness which used to gather in the ancient literary taverns of London. I always fancied that Edgar Allan Poe revisited the earth as Stephen Crane, trying again, succeeding again, failing again, and dying ten years sooner than he did on the other occasion of his stay on earth.

When your letter came I had just returned from Dover, where I stayed four days to see Crane off for the Black Forest. There was a thin thread of hope that he might recover, but to me he looked like a man already dead. When he spoke or rather whispered, there was all the accustomed humor in his sayings. I said to him that I would go over to the Schwarzwald in a few weeks, when he was getting better, and that we would take some convalescent rambles together. As his wife was listening he said faintly, "I'll look forward to that," but he smiled at me and winked slowly, as much as to say, "You damned humbug, you know I'll take no more rambles in this world." Then, as if the train of thought suggested what was looked on before as the crisis of his illness, he mur-

mured, "Robert, when you come to the hedge—that we must all go over—it isn't bad. You feel sleepy—and you don't care. Just a little dreamy curiosity—which world you're really in—that's all."

Tomorrow, Saturday, the 9th, I go again to Dover to meet his body. He will rest for a little while in England, a country that was always good to him, then to America, and his journey will be ended.

I've got the unfinished manuscript of his last novel here beside me, a rollicking Irish tale, different from anything he ever wrote before. Stephen thought I was the only person who could finish it, and he was too ill for me to refuse. I don't know what to do about the matter, for I never could work up another man's ideas. . . .

From the window beside which I write this I can see down in the valley Ravensbrook House, where Crane used to live and where Harold Frederick, he, and I spent many a merry night together. . . . Stephen died at three in the morning, the same sinister hour that carried away our friend Frederick nineteen months before. . . .

I feel rather like the last of the Three Musketeers, the other two gone down in their duel with death. I am wondering if, within the next two years, I also will get the challenge. If so, I shall go to the competing ground the more cheerfully that two such good fellows await the outcome on the other side.

"The unfinished manuscript" was "The O'Ruddy," published in 1903 with Robert Barr appearing on the title-page as joint author.

JOHN H. BIRSS.

New York City.

Shakespeare and *Variety*

Sir:—I loved Morley's tribute to Sime Silverman. Just the right touch. Good. Sime was a fine friend to me. *Variety* I have read for many years.

In all sincerity I wrote him that if "Shakespeare" was with us today, he would read *Variety*, above all other papers. I think he liked that. I meant it. When Edward De Vere wanted to blow off steam he tossed off some stuff under the pen-name, "Robert Greene" or "John Marston." Believe me he knew the game from belly-laugh to the highest flights of fancy. If you fellows would only get out of your trance and listen to the truth, as I know it!

GEORGE FRISBEE.

San Francisco, Cal.

The Saturday Review recommends

This Group of Current Books:

CHARACTERS AND COMMENTARIES. By LYTTON STRACHEY. Harcourt, Brace. A collection of biographical and critical studies.

AMERICA SWINGS TO THE LEFT. By ALVA LEE. Dodd, Mead. The status of American political conditions today.

THE WOMAN ON THE BEAST. By HELEN SIMPSON. Doubleday, Doran. A story of "the age-old conflict between good and evil."

This Less Recent Book:

THE BISHOP'S WIFE. By ROBERT NATHAN. Bobbs-Merrill. A delicate and charming fantasy.

Mädchen in Uniform

THE CHILD MANUELA. By Christa Winsloe. Translated by Agnes Neill Scott. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

ON both book and jacket "The Child Manuela" bears the sub-title "The novel of 'Mädchen in Uniform,'" and the publishers explain that it is not a novelized version of the moving picture, but the prototype from which the picture and also the play "Children in Uniform" were taken. Any discussion of the novel in cities where the moving picture was shown, is, therefore, bound to begin with a comparison with "Mädchen in Uniform." This will be remembered by every one who saw it as a happy conjunction of wonderfully effective acting and beautiful photography, used to tell a singularly touching story,—that of little Manuela von Meinhardis, the daughter of a German officer under the imperial régime, who was sent to a boarding school which was under court patronage, received only daughters of officers, and prided itself upon its inhumanly Spartan standards. Here, where there was no beauty, no affection, no decent comfort, only a single one of the teachers, Fräulein von Bernburg, treated Manuela with any kindness; and Manuela inevitably conceived for her the *Schwärmerei* of a starving adolescent. In a moment of mad excitement, she told of her "crush," so hysterically as to cause the head mistress to consider it a disgrace to the school. She was sentenced to separation from Fräulein von Bernburg, in her despair resolved to throw herself over the banisters—and, according to the moving picture, was prevented at the last moment.

That is the drama of the picture. The outstanding difference in the novel is that, beginning as it does with Manuela's birth, it presents her as specifically homosexual even before her being sent to school. The abnormality is revealed with all the gravity and tenderness of a surgeon searching a wound; but it is unmistakable. It was not by any means so in "Mädchen in Uniform." It is true that this was often spoken of as a study in homosexuality, but some of the professional critics of the screen declared that Manuela was only a school-girl who was passing through the recognized and natural stage in all adolescents of adoration for an older person of the same sex, and that it was her tragedy that at this time she was put into so repulsively unnatural an atmosphere. I agreed with this view; not I hope sentimentally, but because it seemed to me a perfectly possible interpretation of the picture, and one which was a much higher conception artistically. It is of the essence of tragedy that there should be a way out; even if it is impossible for the hero to find it, there must be a conceivable solution; and the peculiar poignance of emotion we feel as a tragedy is unfolded comes very largely from our impotence to warn the hero, to rescue the heroine, to hold open the slowly shutting door. And similarly, it is of the essence of drama in general that it presents a struggle taking place, not merely a wound previously sustained: the blinding of Samson is tragic, but a man born blind is merely pathetic. But if Manuela is a born homosexual, then in our society there is no real solution possible for her, no matter what the circumstances of her adolescence.

Upon this side, then, the picture has done better for its author than she has for herself in her book. On the other hand, the book has beauties and values of its own, which could not be brought out in the swifter passage of a drama. It has a wider scope, showing Manuela's childhood, something of the life behind the scenes of a poor officer in a smart regiment—all his official extravagances and secret pinching and scraping. It shows, too, Manuela's little-girl days, spent in a town in one of the captured provinces, where she grows up in an atmosphere of hate and fear of the garrison among the townspeople, and is herself bred up to hate and fear the

French. It makes up an impressive picture of the seamy side of military glory, insisting on the often forgotten fact that, just as prisons are hard on the warders, the splendor of conquest can bear very hard on the conquerors themselves. If the picture is more impressive as an attack upon the unnatural conditions of the school as a breeder of neuroses, the book suggests something ultimately neurotic in militarism itself, some fundamental weakness in the cult of strength which aims at none



FROM THE JACKET DESIGN OF
"THE CHILD MANUELA"

but the Spartan virtues, and will put up with the Spartan vices.

And the book has its peculiar beauty of expression, as the picture its peculiar beauty of form. The whole story is told with a compassion that exquisitely avoids all sentimentalism. This quality finds its finest expression in the character of Fräulein von Bernburg, who is an even more memorable figure than she was upon the screen. She is an innate homosexual, and she is the one good influence in the school. Living herself as rigidly as a nun, she gives her children an austere affection that will be satisfied with nothing but the best in them; she gives many of the girls their only idea of goodness, and their only happiness, she who has long ago recognized the truth and given up the idea of happiness herself. I know of no other book in which a homosexual is presented without an implied claim upon one's pity (or, in gay and humorous books, upon one's contempt). Fräulein von Bernburg has accepted her misfortune, as she would have accepted blindness, and will have no more of your pity than of her own. She is a figure to know in present literature.

Men and Poetry

SHAKESPEARE AND HAWAII. By Christopher Morley. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1933. \$1.

Reviewed by LEONARD BACON

IT is easier to say pleasant things about Mr. Morley's little book than to give the inquiring reader an ordered account of it. This is just as well, for Mr. Morley certainly never intended the inquiring reader to receive such an account. Anyhow the book consists of a series of three talks delivered last year at the University of Hawaii, and it is about Shakespeare and Hawaii and points between and around. It is good talk, discursive, rambling, full of asides. And it has all the virtues and advantages of extemporaneity. Furthermore scattered here and there are fairly extended bursts of consecutive and acute criticism of men and poetry, passages definitely interesting and provocative.

Mr. Morley's lateral approach to his various topics is sometimes worth the trouble. There are stories by the way that are entertaining. But when he does get to what he thinks important, he is frequently more than entertaining. It was worth while to state again and to state well the necessity of getting at the actual poet, unshrouded by tradition, unconcealed by comment. Nourishment can not be taken vicariously. And Mr. Morley is perfectly right to emphasize the point.

There are also good and eloquent pages on the creative imagination in action. In fact the second of the three talks which is called the "Sense of Significance" has the earmarks of genuine wisdom. A man reads in vain if he does not "collaborate" with his author, if the process that created is not in some degree induced and reproduced in the reader's mind. A truism if you like, but Mr. Morley has done himself proud in the amplification.

The book perhaps suffers from too much discursiveness, from an overdose of vagary. But as a whole it is the genuine result of genuine enthusiasm. And it is a relief to listen in on a conversation about Shakespeare without hearing the semi-religious and sepulchral tones of the professional mystagogue congenially employed in slaying his ten thousands.

The Seagoing Breed

NO MORE SEA. By Wilson Follett. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY TRACY

AN adroit beginning hangs the interest of this tale upon an episode that is not fully explained or resolved until the end of the story. Following back from this faint clue the novel unfolds a human background in ever-deepening perspective. Out of the background figures come into focus, one after another, in sharp detail. They are the men, the women of a family, a breed of seagoing Teaswiths and their wives. From that group emerges a woman whose will it is to break the tradition, fight the sea, remove her son (and his child after him) from its influence. It is a difficult technique, well handled. The story follows a track of light into the deep past of this family in which all the men are masters of ships, all the women are early widowed. Then it leads forward to a point where this doom is challenged. Hatred of the sea for its crimes against fathers, husbands, sons, becomes articulate in one woman.

Human figures in bold relief dominate the picture, but they are not all that give it value. The coast of Maine is here in all its rhythms, its moods, from vindictive to mild, from implacable to mystical and alluring. There are passages dealing with this background that will put "No More Sea" on a book-lover's most available shelf and keep it there. Not the least memorable of them is the one in which we see Windward Haven through the eyes of Abel Teaswith, founder of the line, lately a fugitive from the king's press-gangs. The harbor, the homes sparsely scattered, shadowed by trees, are a landfall to his roving spirit. These are searching and persuasive evocations.

The tragedy of this tale is that a woman fails to understand the breed which has made her men the figures that they are, and seeks for them only safety. In saving them from the sea she breaks the spirit of the breed, and is herself broken. She does this understandably, and through the working of a common passion. It is the passion of possessive maternity. She must live out her life in her son, she must enjoy him fully. It is well that the results of such a course should be seared into the consciousness of many. In a day of dwindling national pride, this book tells what America has, in the past, been good for.

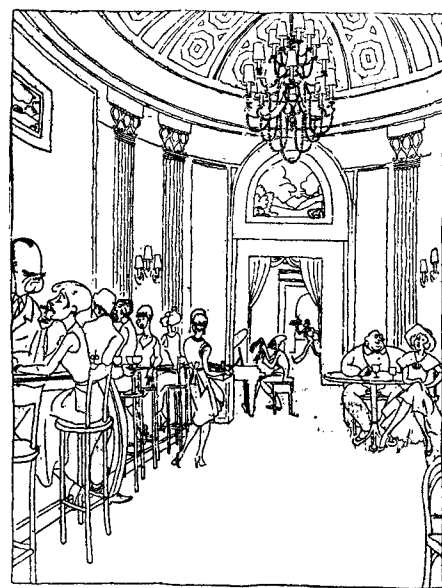


A ROCKWELL KENT DRAWING
From "Rockwellkentiana." Courtesy of
Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Stories of Prohibition

(Continued from first page)

the big First Night to come—the opening performance of "As Millions Cheer; or, Repeal is Here"—but also in what Stanley Walker calls "Last Night." Here, my hearties, is the bitterest, the downright scalding account yet written of The Dawn of Prohibition. If it doesn't become part of the record I'll be greatly surprised. Steeping his pen in pure essence of gall and writing almost casually—and that's what makes it all so devastating—Walker presents the almost incredible story in a series of ironic facts. The method is swell and the story even better. It's a grand piece to read aloud while drinking—perpendicularly, obliquely, or horizontally—the first night of repeal. It will sound remote, unreal, fantastic—and you will get credit for being a great entertainer. Everyone will credit you with improvising as you read. Some of the facts contained in this chapter sound like burlesque and as you bring the house down your friends will chorus, "I didn't know it was in him." One of your best laughs will come when you read the memorable paragraph in which William H. Anderson, Superintendent of the New York State Anti-Saloon League (prohibition is about to become a reality and he is "magnanimous in his triumph") is quoted as saying to the American drinker: "Be a good sport about it. No more falling off the water wagon. Uncle Sam will help you keep your



NIGHT CLUB

Drawing by Al Hirschfeld from "Manhattan Oases." Courtesy of E. P. Dutton & Co.

pledge." What a service the author has performed in recalling—in a quietly satiric setting—this classic example of the modern Pecksniff at his worst!

If you think I'm going to go on telling you what's in the book you're mistaken. For some unknown reason, only mystery stories get any decent protection from reviewers. The indulgent critic invariably shields the murderer's identity, as though it really mattered who killed Sir Cecil Droopinglip.

The type of book that needs protection from the over-gabby reviewer is "The Night Club Era." I'm for shooting anyone who gives away Walker's best anecdotes, oddments, and so on. That's why I won't tell you a thing that's in the chapter called "Owney, the Old Master," a corking study of Owney Madden, one of the world's most amazing characters. If you think I'm trying to arouse your curiosity, you're right. If you aren't interested enough to buy the book, to heck with you. Too many people are enabled, by over-detailed reviews,* to make after-dinner conversation of books they've never read. I expect to change all that. I've turned reformer.

And, by the way, Alva Johnston has written a swell introduction. I admit this grudgingly because I happen to be the Past, Present, and Future President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Readers and one of our strictest by-laws is an anti-introduction dictum. Now I am all humility, for Johnston has proved to me that an introduction can be worth reading.

* Edward Anthony speaks as an author, having collaborated with Clyde Beatty on "The Big Cage" and with Frank Buck on "Bring 'Em back Alive" and "Wild Cargo."