

Elizabeth Barrett's Immortal Spaniel

FLUSH. A Biography. By Virginia Woolf. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1933. \$2.

FLUSH OF WIMPOLE STREET AND BROADWAY. By Flora Merrill. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1933. \$1.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THE authorities for a biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's famous golden cocker spaniel, "Flush," are few. Chiefly illuminating are Miss Barrett's and later Mrs. Browning's comments in her voluminous letters. These comments, almost all of them, Mrs. Woolf has worked into the fabric of her biography. It is scarcely necessary to say that anything written by this author is worth our closest attention. Her latest book is in the nature of a diversion, but no less well executed for all that.

Peculiarly enough, another book, not to be mentioned in the same breath as to literary merit, has just appeared, to illustrate a certain childish method that Mrs. Woolf quite naturally avoided. It is the autobiography of the little dog who acted the part of Flush in the company of Katharine Cornell when "The Barretts of Wimpole Street" was given in America. Here the Spaniel speaks in the first person. And alas!—though this device is now thoroughly moss-bedraped, one cannot help noting that a writer of such admitted merit as Mr. Manuel Komroff is at this very moment presenting to the world "I, the Tiger," in which a real tiger speaks to you directly from the printed page. Tch-tch!

Mrs. Woolf, however, is an artist. She is not engaged in making Flush "cute." She attempts to live his life with him in retrospective imagination, as though her intelligence had assumed his limitations and she were as near to the ground as he. Consequently, she has succeeded in giving us a real dog, pointing out all that was beyond the periphery of his understanding, reinterpreting even some of his own mistress's judgments concerning him. For it turns out that Mrs. Browning, for all her love of Flush, was not a particularly keen observer of her faithful attendant. Addicted to fancies, she has left us a striking one, of the spaniel, in "Flush or Faunus?" But she did not possess the intuition of Mrs. Woolf, to enter into dog-nature and feel things as Flush felt them. She did not realize when the dog's spirit was hurt or, indeed, why he bit Mr. Browning. She did not even know, in another connection, that Flush was something of a snob!

Mrs. Woolf, aside from her interpretation of Flush's nature, the most interesting discussion of spaniel origins which begins the book, and that marvelous first paragraph at the end of section one—the likeness suddenly felt between Flush and his mistress,—aside from all this, the author has brought out saliently, in her account of Flush's kidnappings, the fact of the proximity of the most abhorrent slums to plethoric Wimpole Street in that dear old blind-as-a-bat Victorian era. Her one glimpse of Whitechapel, indeed, so impressed Mrs. Browning that she put a description of it in "Aurora Leigh." But the age regarded such phenomena as a natural visitation of God. So the beautiful romance of the Brownings flourished with destitution, starvation, and vice, just around the corner. But until Mankind come to their senses, that is likely to happen to any of us. Later on, in Italy, Mrs. Browning took to crystal-gazing and table-rapping. Flush's attitude toward this furnishes an interestingly rationalistic ending to Mrs. Woolf's book. Apparently she sturdily opposes the belief that sometimes animals may hear and see things of which human beings are unaware. Flush, unlike his mistress, was a realist.

To turn to Flora Merrill's story of the cocker spaniel who got such good notices at the Empire Theatre, is to take up an amusing little book, chiefly of interest for the inserted excerpts from letters exchanged by the Brownings. In them one finds mentioned almost every incident that

Mrs. Woolf has woven into her biography. But one continues to marvel at the dexterity with which the latter has used this material and how she has managed to clothe with real life the dry bones of anecdote. Yet—another finding must be reported. In Miss Merrill's rather amusing little account of the theatre dog, illustrated by the inimitably dog-conscious "Edwina," a Scottie named Kim, who is introduced as the pet of Mr. Guthrie McClintic, is made to tell the puppy who is to play the part of Flush that his prototype

"was fat. And goodness knows, he had a right to be. In one of those books it tells how they gave him coffee and muffins, and macaroons and sugared cream. If they left out the sugar, he wouldn't touch it. He wouldn't eat cream cheese unless they put salt on it, and he wouldn't eat meat unless it was fed to him on a fork."

I fear these details are true. But Mrs. Woolf has seen fit to spare us any such utter disillusionment in her biography. She handles the matter of Flush's meals with sympathy and tact!

Last of the Cherrells

ONE MORE RIVER. By John Galsworthy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HOMER E. WOODBRIDGE

IT seems unmannerly for a reviewer to find fault with the last novel of a dead author whose work for many years has given him great and lasting pleasure, especially when the author is one who, like Mr. Galsworthy, accepted criticism with gracious serenity. But it is no compliment to a writer to judge his work by a standard lower than his own best achievement; and compared with the Forsyte novels, or even with "Maid in Waiting" or "Flowering Wilderness," "One More River" is decidedly thin. Mr. Galsworthy may have felt that he owed it to his readers to finish in some way the story of his delightful heroine Dinny Cherrell; or perhaps the trilogy habit for the time being got the better of him. Whatever the cause, he spun the last novel of this trilogy out of pretty scanty material.

So far as Dinny is concerned, her adventures can be summed up in a sentence: after a fashion she gets over her passionate love affair with Wilfrid Desert, and marries, without much enthusiasm, an entirely worthy and correct but uninteresting barrister. Jane Austen might have found the stuff for a first-rate novel here; but for Mr. Galsworthy, who has always been more interested in the onset of love than in convalescence from it, Dinny's story was not enough. He therefore eked it out with the story of Clare, Dinny's younger sister, who, as readers of "Flowering Wilderness" may remember, married a middle-aged officer in the colonial service and went to Ceylon. It is Clare who is central in the plot of "One More River." Before the story opens, she has left her husband, who has turned out to be a sadistic brute, and returned to England. On the ship she has met Tony Croom, a penniless youngster who falls desperately in love with her. She keeps him at arm's length, but allows him to see her often; and her husband, returning to England in search of her, has her shadowed by detectives and obtains evidence enough to divorce her. Being technically innocent, she fights the case, partly because her family wish it, and partly to save her lover from punitive damages. The trial scenes give the story such climax as it has.

Here, one would say, is a theme more congenial to Mr. Galsworthy than Dinny's unromantic marriage; but none of the persons chiefly concerned in the situation interested him greatly. The result is that the story cannot stand on its own feet; it depends for most of its interest on a knowledge of the preceding books. We meet again and enjoy many old friends—Sir Lawrence and Lady Mont, Fleur Forsyte, Adrian and Hilary Cherrell. There are good scenes, and intimate pictures of town and country life; there is often admirable phrasing. But a reader who is approaching Mr. Galsworthy for the first time had better begin with some other book.

The Pre-Raphaelites

POOR SPLENDID WINGS. The Rossettis and Their Circle. By Frances Winwar. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1933. \$3.50.

DESPITE the rather sobbing title, this is a thoroughly intelligent re-creation of a glamorous period of English painting and poetry, and a book that presents the Pre-Raphaelites as vibrant human beings. Frances Winwar is a graphic writer and her evaluations are just, even though she seems to us just slightly to exaggerate the demonism of Swinburne. Perhaps not, however. He was truly demonic, being a genius. Her Holman Hunt emerges as he must have been, the one true Pre-Raphaelite, first, last, and all the time. One of the books we still dip into from time to time is the two-volume edition of Hunt's "Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," which is, of course, included in Miss Winwar's excellent bibliography, though it does not list Violet Hunt's in many ways remarkable "The Wife of Rossetti" which appeared last year. This is probably because in a review of that volume published in *The Saturday Review of Literature* for December 17, 1932, Miss Winwar took strong exception to Miss Hunt's dependence upon "chiefly oral" sources for her portrait of Rossetti,

ing, and a renaissance of art in one of its dearest periods. The splendid youth of the movement, the triumphs and the tragedies of the various lives that composed it, have here found a most exhilarating and moving chronicle.

Caldwell's New Stories

WE ARE THE LIVING. By Erskine Caldwell. New York: The Viking Press. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by JEROME MELLQUIST

THIS book is an advance for Erskine Caldwell because it feels more than the books which preceded it. This should not be surprising. For the author of "God's Little Acre" has now and then shown elsewhere that he was capable of something much better than the coarse laughter, the tough social anger, and the apparently reckless horseplay of that book. Underneath, all the time the last four years, he has actually been rather shy—almost constrained—about expressing his more sensitive feelings.

Now he is tender enough to touch us. Especially in "The Empty Room," where no incident, or clash, or suspense, or bravado is there to help: a girl-wife has simply returned in the gray evening to the room where her recently buried husband used to sleep; she sits there, weeps softly,



ROSETTI'S BACK GARDEN
From "The Poets' Corner," by Max Beerbohm. (Dodd, Mead)

and pointed out that "in her desire to do Lizzie justice Miss Hunt has libelled one without whom the obscure little milliner's assistant would never have been heard of." It is a fact that Miss Hunt depended far too much upon her memories of what was said, far too little on documentation. And Miss Winwar's drawing of Elizabeth Siddall is indeed more trustworthy. Even at that, the impression is inescapable that the sufferings of the actual Miss Siddall—how needlessly cruel they seem!—could hardly have compensated her for any vision of a posthumous fame as the inspiration of one who shone as the head and front of Pre-Raphaelitism. However, one is certainly more inclined to trust Miss Winwar with the history of the Brotherhood than one is to rely on Miss Hunt's sensational pen. The truth is affecting enough.

They are all here "in the habit as they lived," Millais, all the Rossettis, Hunt, Woolner, Swinburne, Madox Brown, Ruskin, "Topsy" Morris, "Ned" Jones, James Coolinson, Elizabeth Siddall, Jane Burden—and those other striking figures outside the charmed circle, Whistler, and George Meredith. They are all here with their histories that had so much of the phenomenal about them that, under the spell of such vivid writing as Miss Winwar's, her book has much of the color of a fascinating work of fiction, though thoroughly true to fact. The life of Ruskin or of Swinburne, either one alone, is the strangest of studies.

The book is worthy of the Atlantic prize which it won. It is a vital chapter in the history of English art and literature. The Pre-Raphaelites accomplished a revolution in taste, slow though it was in com-

* Swinburne and Watts-Dunton on the wall. Below, from left to right, Whistler, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Caine, Elizabeth Siddall, Morris, Ruskin. Behind Ruskin, Hunt and Gosse.

undresses, and suddenly cries out. That is all. Yet one is lonely with her. Another "message from the heart" is in "After-Image," where the narrator recalls how he boarded a ship, met a woman just deserted by the man she loved, went once to her cabin, and then stood at the rail—unprotesting—while she slipped overboard. You understand why, even though the haltings, repetitions, and apologies in the account lack meaning.

But when Mr. Caldwell adds symbolism to this type of story he is less direct, for it is as if the simple feeling were not enough by itself. We see a case of this sort in "Warm River." The young man's discovery of unfeeling love is soft and lyrical and cleansing as it is; so why the river and the dipping of his hands there afterwards? The experience justifies itself. A more dangerous weakness is Mr. Caldwell's tendency to become sentimental without sufficient substance to arouse or to support the emotion, as in "The First Autumn."

What of the sixteen remaining stories? To me the best of them is "August Afternoon," where Floyd a stranger dallies with Vic's wife while he tosses a long toad-stabber in his hand, and a negro speaks fearfully to Vic: there is something sultry and ominous here. The rest, I admit, have greater concreteness, clarity of outline, and sectional flavor than the stories of the more emotional sort; but too much is mere incident, local peculiarity, unpenetrated violence, or undirected humor. These stories seem hard in comparison with those mentioned earlier.

Yet stories of this type are being demanded more and more of this talented young writer. Will he resist this demand? And will he produce less rapidly? He owes this to himself—more, to that waiting stream of life which will flow more deeply if he will write from it always.

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. 12.

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.

Literary Nationalism If you cannot cure a disease, the next best is to try to prevent it from spreading. Now, whether a disease or a functional maladjustment, economic nationalism has epidemic characteristics. The modern world which has been dependent upon selling, clamors with many voices, "Buy British," "Buy American," "Buy French," "Buy Eskimo." Every nation wants to sell its surplus outside its borders, and no one wants to buy from foreigners. It is an economic paradox which leads direct toward the low-level living of, say, the eleventh century. The idea will spread.

One might hope that the jittery states which are tearing down the economic structure by which they live, would see where they are headed and turn. But it is not so simple as all that. Fear, whether of military or of economic force, is not easily dispelled by reason. And reason itself shows that there is more than fear in economic nationalism. Many authorities question whether capitalist imperialism can continue to pay the bills of progress, and believe that every country must create new markets within its borders by a redistribution of the rewards of production. This means temporarily a policy of isolation, which is also likely to result from the conditions which make the problems of the United States, Russia, and Great Britain so different from those of France, or of Central Europe. Thus it is probable that (barring the incalculable results of war) economic constriction will continue at least for the next decade and so will the intense localism of the national state. And accepting this, what will happen to literature, what will happen to science?

Only the blind or the foolish can expect that this epidemic will not spread beyond economics. It has spread. In Russia, and to a lesser degree in Italy, literature and especially the literature of ideas, has long been under a direct or an indirect censorship. In Jugo-Slavia a native is not allowed to board a foreign boat for fear that he will obtain forbidden reading matter. Germany has banned most of her best book of the last decade, and in an appeal published in the June *Die Neue Literatur* booksellers were urged to refuse to sell other German books which were neither Jewish, Pacifist, or Communist, but could not be proved to be helpful to the Nazi cause. The official spokesman declared only last month that the days of "free science" in Germany were done.

Europe must clean her own house. Our duty begins, at least, at home. And it is the clear duty of every intelligent American who respects his mind to think out this situation and take his stand. If the English-speaking mind is healthier in politics and in education and even in economics than the typical European mind today (and we believe profoundly that it is) the prevailing reason is the free circulation of the best books, which means the best ideas of the world, among us. We are so far neither self-satisfied like the better-balanced French, nor over-balanced by nationalistic passions like the Germans, nor obsessed with a recreation of society by force like the Russians.

Our respite is only temporary. As the tides of nationalism rise, the pressure will begin. We cannot wait for these tides to fall, as they surely will after the flood, for too much that is precious may be lost. Therefore it is the clear duty of every one who does not wish to see a new society, (no matter how economically just)—begin on a lower cultural level, to take his stand and to take it now. Free choice may not be left to us in economic change (who can tell?), but a choice in culture is ours. The individual, apparently helpless in the grip of economic forces, is not helpless in the pursuit of an idea, in the choice of a book. And let those who think that the resistance of individuals is futile in culture or religion or science, reread their history. Intellectual self-sufficiency in this country certainly means the ultimate sacrifice of our hard-worn modern culture to the ideas, the ideals, and worst of all, to the imagination, of whatever Ku Klux Klan becomes dominant.

Ring Lardner Ring Lardner was one of those not uncommon writers whose success with a large public retarded the critical recognition of their literary importance. Mark Twain was another, and so perhaps was Shakespeare, although we make no comparisons with the latter. With Mark Twain the parallel was striking. Both men were essentially journalists; both were humorists of genius—which meant that the stupidity and the irony and the grimness of life was touched in their best works with personality, and so became human; both had a transcendent faculty for echoing the living speech of their times; both were uneven, working in a margin of careless writing; both created an America which was new, sufficiently true to fact, and entirely true to the imagination. Lardner can claim no such masterpiece of an age as was "Huckleberry Finn"; but his worst writing was incomparably better than Mark's worst, indeed his average was probably better than Mark's average. And we suspect that if his publishers can be persuaded to bring out a volume of carefully selected short stories, his best writing will prove to belong to the really important literature in English of this generation. He was worth a dozen suave English second-raters or serious-minded plodders through the American scene.

To those of the middle generation the arrival of Henri Barbusse in person last week must have given a thrill to memory. His "Le Feu" was the first of the war books which gave to the horror-struck reader some conception of the dirt, the fear, the savagery, and the depressive dullness of life in the trenches. And yet it was an intensely human book also, humorous, brave, and touching. It foreshadowed all that is best in the other now famous stories of the after-war gleaning.



"I'M GOING TO EXPAND YOU INTO A FULL-LENGTH NOVEL"

To the Editor: To the Defense of Wells and Walpole

Is Pacifism Doomed?

Sir: I wonder if Mr. Lawrence Dennis, justifying his preference for twentieth century warfare in his review of "The Shape of Things to Come," is not motivated more by his own persuasive powers than by actualities?

Is modern warfare a "fundamental type of behavior?" There seem to have been wars in the past whose spirit was a healthy pugnacity. But is there anything healthy or progressive or productive of the "glory" of a country in the phenomenon of civilized beings, fed by wholesale doses of sensational propaganda, going forth to drop bombs of poison gas which will effect the long-range murder of the greatest possible number of men, women, and children designated as the "enemy?"

Can it be possible that the devastation and subsequent distress of the last conflict have not yet shown us that modern warfare is not the road to universal employment and plenty and the solution of national problems generally?

And what a superb paradox—"Those who stress the contribution of modern technology to the terrors of present-day war usually fail to take into account the compensating contributions of the same technology to human comfort and welfare during modern wars." Modern efficiency believes in trying to offset its blunders! It may kill several thousand people in the morning but it is busy all afternoon in giving expert medical aid to those who are in agony due to some slight failure of technical precision.

Mr. Dennis's contention of the fallacy in Wells's belief in the power of the intellectualism of peace to prevail over the emotionalism of war seems to me misconstrued. This belief does not, as he asserts, assume that emotion and intellect are separately functioning springs of action. It does, however, show Mr. Wells among those who hold to their faith in the capacity of intelligence to pull in the reins before misguided and exploited emotions carry us over the precipice of race suicide.

F. A. POWERS.

Montclair, New Jersey

Mountebank Credit

Sir: I was one of the select circle who attended that famous lecture given by Sinclair Lewis at The Town Hall, in New York, some years ago, when he bade his listeners to turn from our fashion of catering to British authors, asserting that our cringing attitude was sickening, and that we had plenty of native authors worth commending. This was before Lewis became famous, yet there is a lot in what he said. Our lecture halls are filled when second rate British authors condescend to give us impressions of the jolly old U. S. A. In London one couldn't draw a baker's dozen as an audience. Our critics give British authors far more space than is granted to American writers. It is otherwise in England.

Yet—there is another side of the picture. I believe that American writers should be treated with courtesy in British publications,—and given the same serious consideration in American literary journals as our cousins from over-seas. British authors have always been treated seriously; yet one of the better known, Hugh

Walpole, is spoken of so insultingly in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, for September 16, in an article by George Dangerfield, that I am not so insular that I fail to read the remark without resentment. Says Mr. Dangerfield: "The Herries saga as a whole may not last very long; most of it was written by a literary mountebank—the best of his kind, to be sure, but still a mountebank." A synonym for quack, charlatan, cheat, fraud. Now, I maintain, this isn't literary criticism, but an exhibition of venom and bad taste. Biased though I may be in wishing American authors to be more appreciated at home and abroad, I do not wish this at the risk of an American reviewer leaping the bounds of good taste in so attacking an admirable British novelist.

JOHN WILSTACH.

Rhinebeck, N. Y.

As it happens, Mr. Dangerfield is an Englishman.—The Editor.

Church Militant

Sir: I wish to express my surprise over your publishing Felix Morrow's review of "The March of Faith," by Garrison, in your issue of Sept. 9. This is not so much a review as a palpably prejudiced attack on the American Church. There may be room for a difference of opinion as to the attitude of American churches during the World War, but any one who is capable of characterizing their support of the U. S. Government and the Allies as "jingoism" is incapable of passing upon their function and purpose in any field. The review abounds in sarcastic, not to say splenetic allusions of this nature, and appears to me unworthy of the *Saturday Review*. I once heard another man by the name of Morrow, the distinguished statesman who managed to be a good christian and a good capitalist at the same time, remark that, as a result of a long experience, when it came to the passing of judgment upon men, measures, or movements, he divided all men into two classes: those who reached their conclusion as the result of an open and impartial mind, and those who followed some hunch. And he added that rarely did he find a man of the former sort. I am glad to say that rarely do I find a writer in the *Saturday Review* of the latter sort. But this time you certainly made a slip.

CORNELIUS H. PATTON.

Hartford, Conn.

A. B. Frost

Sir: With full sanction and aid from his family I am gathering material for a first volume on the late A. B. Frost, illustrator, humorist, and artist of sport.

Any information as to the whereabouts of letters from Mr. Frost, or of his more important original drawings (especially those of hunting or fishing scenes) will be greatly appreciated; and of course any material entrusted for copying will be handled with great care and, if desired, insured against loss or accident.

Unequaled in his own lines among American illustrators, Frost is a figure significant enough in our development to warrant a biographer's hope for coöperation from owners of his work or correspondence—to help accomplish an adequate presentation.

HENRY W. LANIER.

16 Gramercy Park, N. Y.

The Saturday Review recommends

This Group of Current Books:

WAR MEMOIRS OF DAVID LLOYD GEORGE. Little, Brown. The first volume of one of the essential war records.

ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS. Translated by PEARL S. BUCK. Day. One of the great works of Chinese fiction.

GIVE YOUR HEART TO THE HAWKS. By ROBINSON JEFFERS. Random House. A narrative poem of dramatic nature.

This Less Recent Book:

INVITATION TO THE WALTZ. By ROSAMOND LEHMANN. Holt. The story of a young girl's entrance into life.