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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
114 Fifth Avenue, New York

Post-Boom Florida

PORTRAIT OF EDEN. By Margaret Sperry. New York: Liveright, Inc. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by L. CABOT HEARN

THE story, or rather the stories, involved in "Portrait of Eden" are somewhat disjointedly presented, but there is indubitable merit in the writing of this novel. It is not a pleasant picture, but it sounds as though it were a pretty truthful one. One gets a little tired of the soft Southern lingo in which the characters talk, but that also seems veracious; and there is a varied assortment of characters well-studied. Some of the worst aspects of human nature are seen in this ironically named Eden, and the whole tale ends in bitter tragedy. But in spite of the author's tendency toward melodrama, and a fault she must rid herself of, that of the repetition of an originally striking comparison, "Eden is built in the shape of the cross upon which the Lord Jesus is said to have died," and "red birds like clots of blood" (these will do for examples), she can write with powerful vividness. She has a distinct dramatic sense.

The negro John Marquis, who comes back from the north, is the only person who really talks like an educated man, and somehow his speech is not convincing. The religious hysteria of both blacks and whites is, however, well handled, if rather too omnipresent in the story. The good Doctor McIntyre and the bad Editor McFeil—though a little too good and bad—are well contrasted individuals. The helpless Ed Williams is a less obvious character, and more impressive. Nancy Peace, and the abortionist and his wife and daughter, together with the poor desperate bit of flotsam, Eva, are pretty real people. The millionaire who wants to save Eden does not convince us so much. But the interweaving of all these lives, and their various patterns in one fabric, is presented with a laudable desire for natural development. As for the background, the description of the country and the town, and of the generally degenerate character of its politics, religion, and sex life, one does not doubt its general truthfulness.

The present reviewer concedes this novel decided "points," and its author no inconsiderable ability. "Portrait of Eden" is one of those works of fiction that arouse a hope that the author will go on to write even better novels. For at her best Miss Sperry is decidedly good. She knows how to evoke character through dialogue and how to evoke vivid atmosphere in passages of description. And she knows a good deal about human nature, good and bad. She has power over words, but she needs to guard against a natural facility that at times runs away with her into "overwriting." As it is, she has given us a mordantly sardonic view of a locale she evidently knows. It is an attempt at unsparingly honest realism, marred by melodrama.

Men and Cattle

RED HEIFER. A Story of Men and Cattle. By F. D. Davison. New York: Coward-McCann. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THE American reader will not be surprised to hear that Mr. Davison's little story of the Australian cattle-country won a prize in its native land as the best Australian novel of the year. It has, among other things, the priceless quality of freshness—not merely novelty of pattern (for it is all about an heroic cow!) but that inner freshness which comes from closeness to the earth and deep, strong feeling about earthy things put into simple words. It is a "little" story and yet a "big" story—it has a quality of greatness.

The scenes suggest some of our own mountainous and more or less desert cattle-country. The ranches are on the flat, where there are water-holes or the joining of many little, sparse, down-trickling streams into a creek or something like a river. Down here are corrals and fenced ranges. The herds, for the most part, graze on the open but nearby foothills where they can easily be rounded up, but every now and then little "mobs," as they seem to be called in Australian slang, wander

away from the herd to the high country. These "scrubbers" go practically wild, hide like deer in the bush, and although they are forced in the dry season to come down for water, they do so only at night and with all the craft and caution of wild animals. When a cowboy, at round-up time, tracks down one of these mobs, its members scatter into the timber like so many quail and when they are actually caught and driven into a corral they will sometimes, it appears, refuse to eat, and go tramping round and round with their muzzles to the rails or simply stand huddled until the cattlemen, in desperation, shoot them for their hides.

The red cow of the story lost its mother through the latter's drowning in a water-hole when it was still a calf and it only squeaked through to survival by being adopted—a rare thing—by another cow which already had a calf. It dodged the first branding and when it finally was branded on the next round-up, it hurdled the corral gate and ran for it, hot with hatred and fear of man and all his works. It joined a mob of scrubbers and the rest of the story, with brief excursions into the life of the scrubbers, is that of the slow but relentless closing in of "civilization" on the open range, on the scrubbers, and on the red cow herself.

You may think that, with only a cow for a heroine, the author will be hard put to it to hold our sympathy, yet not only does Mr. Davison do that quite completely, he so integrates the life of the red cow with the wheeling of the earth through day and night, the march of the seasons, and the eternal encroachments of man on the virgin wilderness, that—without ever departing from the animal's point of view—his story rises to the stark beauty of tragedy.

A Success Story of the Bull Ring

SHADOWS OF THE SUN. By Alejandro Perez Lugin. Translated by Sidney Franklin. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

THIS is a Spanish success story, not far removed in formula from the once popular tales of Horatio Alger, wherein the boy heroes invariably made good and frequently married the boss's daughter. Currito, "The Kid," the young protagonist of "Shadows of the Sun," goes in for bullfighting, instead of railroading or selling newspapers, but the pattern of his life has the charm of familiarity. From the humblest beginnings he rises to the heights of his profession, conquers his last rival and the betrayer of the girl he loves, and finally marries the daughter of the great matador, Manuel Carmona, who has been the object of his worship and emulation.

The American reader who knows nothing of bullfighting will probably make as much of this novel as the average Spanish reader would make of the life history of a star baseball player. But the reader who has suffered even the least infection of tauromania will be fascinated by Lugin's picture of the bullfighter's life. He will forget the banality and occasional false sentiment of the story, and find himself engrossed in the idiom and typical characters of Spain's national sport. Fighters, patrons, promoters, fans, hangers-on, critics, breeders—they are all here; those who live by fighting bulls, and those who live on those who fight them. They are vividly portrayed, from intimate knowledge, and they speak the language of their kind. None of Currito's corridas is described in full detail, but there is enough technical description to bring back poignantly the sights and sounds and smells of the plaza de toros to those who have known and thrilled to them. The struggle for supremacy between Currito and Romerito takes on something of the heroic proportions of the historic duel between Belmonte and Joselito. The fiction—always excepting the central love story—borrows stature from the reader's knowledge of recorded fact.

For one who has seen and admired Sidney Franklin in the bull ring, it is a pleasure to report that he acquires himself as a translator with courage and aplomb.

Youth in England, With a Difference

THEN A SOLDIER. By Thomas Dent. New York: The John Day Company. 1934. \$2.75.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENET

IN my time I have read a great many novels of the childhood, school-life, and adolescence of English boys and young men. By this time anything an English writer tells me about the English public schools has long since ceased to shock. I have also read some pretty grim accounts of the experiences of English conscientious objectors in the late Great War. It seems to me from the fiction I have scanned in the last fifteen years or so that I know a good deal about the dark side of English childhood, boyhood, and young manhood. And here is another novel about a sensitive boy who fought his way through to manhood encountering much the same conditions that I have already pondered.

And yet this novel of "Thomas Dent's" is different in several ways. In the first place the childhood setting is different. For though a thoroughly English child is here presented, it is in the backwoods of Africa that we first find him. Also, we are informed by the publishers that this is the autobiographical story "of a well-known young English author, who has told his story so honestly that it can appear only under a pseudonym." In the dark forward and abyss of time we may just possibly attain so civilized an attitude toward the complicated suffering of human life that authors can print true stories of their lives over their own names. As yet we haven't. So the pseudonym is quite justifiable. And I am not so curious a person as to wish to spend much time in speculating who this "well-known young English author" may be. My concern is with the merits and demerits of the book as a story, whether fact or fiction.

It seems to me a well-written story, though not a novel of the first class, in which class I should put comparatively few. But it is a good second-rate novel. For the most part it holds the attention and the writing, though of no great distinction, is good enough. The construction of the book is interesting, in that the author looks back upon his former selves, first as Tommy, then as Tom the Second or "The Wuffhum" (a nickname he acquired at school), and then as Tom the third. Each self died at a certain specific moment when the succeeding self was born. In each instance the growth of experience reached a certain point when a revelatory shock of some kind changed, first the child into the boy, and then the boy into the young man. We can all remember similar turning-points or points-of-advance in our own lives. The structure of the book is sound.

The fact that the hypothetical Thomas Dent's father believed profoundly in the wickedness of taking life, and that the child was brought up to look upon fighting as wrong, deeply influenced his young life in conflict with other boys; for boys are young barbarians, and a youngster through a certain period of his life usually has to fight his way. Tom the Second discovered also that he blushed easily, a characteristic he seemed powerless to prevent. He went through his school years as the butt of other boys. But he was also a healthy and manly young human animal. He grew to love poetry, principally William Blake's, and developed a decided literary ability. His sex life developed normally, and the progress of the curiosity of youth in regard to sex is well described. The book will be over-frank in some details to suit some readers; but it is honestly set down.

The Library of Congress, which contains the largest collection of books and manuscripts in America, now possesses a million separate films of other books and manuscripts. Most of them were made at libraries throughout Europe during the past two years. It has been said that scholars may now save a trip abroad by reading the newly filmed works. The library also has several million photographic copies of scholars' raw material.



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SATURDAY REVIEW: "The editors recommend it for Christmas. An excellent novel of lovable scandal."

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BRILLIANT: "It will shock some readers . . . some will find laughter in its pages; others pathos and pity. All will praise the author's literary competence. She succeeds brilliantly."—John Clair Minot, BOSTON HERALD.

POWERFUL: "The book is full of beauty . . . What I care about in it is the enchantment it throws over you, the freshness and clearness of the people in it . . . and it is all done out of a powerful creative talent."—Gilbert Seldes, N. Y. JOURNAL.

APPEALING: "Completely out of the ordinary . . . a story of New England shanty-folk that is outspoken, frank, well-

told and very appealing . . . A rich, bawdy, somewhat sentimental, but highly readable novel, Miss Lincoln's first. I liked it a lot because the people in it seemed very human and altogether credible. And grandma herself is worth twice the price of admission."—Herschel Brickell, N. Y. POST.

A FIND! "Run (do not walk) to your nearest bookshop and fight for a copy of February Hill. You may have to. There is good humor, strong, even merciless beauty of utterance, hard brilliance of style in this first novel—in short, everything to put the name of Victoria Lincoln up front with the few genuine finds of the year."—Charles Wagner, N. Y. MIRROR.

A NATURAL: "One of those true naturals which occasionally drop into a reviewer's lap . . . and there is not a single yawn within its covers . . . Miss Lincoln has written this rowdy, ribald novel with that skill and artistry which will keep you palpitating between tears and laughter until you are not sure whether she intends it for humor or pathos, and that, they tell me, is the true test of humor."—ST. LOUIS GLOBE DEMOCRAT.

ALIVE: "A grand comic yarn, not untouched with pathos, of a scandalous harum-scarum family which lives in a shanty near Fall River . . . as fresh and funny as they come . . . Endlessly inventive, insouciant, alive, this novel is in a class by itself."—THE FORUM.

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ENGAGING: "A most engaging tale . . . in a class by itself. There won't be another story with which to compare it until Victoria Lincoln once again takes her pen in hand."—Philomena Hart, PROVIDENCE JOURNAL.

WARM: "An unqualified, if impure delight. I can recall few books so warm and lovable."—Laetitia McDonald.

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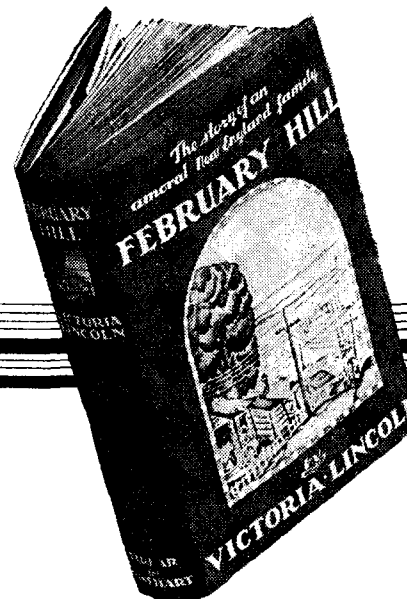
DISTINGUISHED: "One needs to be no literary Columbus to descry a very real talent in the author of February Hill. Books so consistently amusing and satisfying simply do not spring up out of the dry dust of hack writing . . . a novel full of gusty mirth . . . a delightful and in many ways a distinguished performance."—B. B., LOUISVILLE COURIER JOURNAL.

MASTERPIECE: "The publishers have a masterpiece on their hands in February Hill . . . Nothing can stop this gorgeous book."—HARRISBURG TELEGRAPH.

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DELIGHTFUL: "It is the most delightful book that I have read in many a day and I wish to heaven that Amy and Grandma were my creations. I go around jabbering about it to all my friends and I intend to give it as a Christmas present. If my friends don't enjoy it, then they are forever off my list."—Letitia Preston Randall.



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Movies and Modern History

The other night we went to the moving picture of "Monte Cristo", and came away convinced that we must have a set of the Cambridge Modern History of our own. (And not because we don't know about the Hundred Days, either, though we well remember that when we first read "Monte Cristo" we didn't.)

WHAT THE FILMS OMIT

"It is possible," said Sherlock Holmes, "to attain a striking, though perhaps meretricious, effect, by presenting the beginning and end of a process of reasoning without the intermediate steps." The beginning of our process of reasoning lay in thinking what a good picture it was; as good as could be made; the end of Fernand Mondego was better than the book. But what a lot had to be cut out! How we missed the slow poisoning of the Villefort family, and Bertuccio shivering in the rain of blood, and the old paralytic Noirtier making his fatal revelation with his eyelids! It couldn't be helped, of course; the movies hadn't time for everything.

CATHERINE II

Then we remembered the two pictures we had seen dealing with Catherine of Russia, "The Scarlet Empress" and "Catherine the Great". We had meant at the time to look up the history of it, and find out some things that had always puzzled us—whether, for instance, Catherine governed as an avowed usurper, or as Regent, or as legitimate Empress, and if so, how; but now it struck us that this must be another story like "Monte Cristo", full of good scenes the films couldn't find room for. So we settled down and read the whole story in the Cambridge Modern History. We learned the circumstances of the semi-foreign dynasty, and how it had come about that the Czarina Elisabeth was absolute Empress in her own right. We enjoyed the irony in choosing Catherine as a bride for Peter because she and her father's principality were so insignificant that she would make no difficulties. We followed the disintegration of Peter's character and the development of Catherine's, witnessed the affair with Orloff (who gave her one of the world's great diamonds), the Palace Revolution (and say what you like, we always felt that a palace revolution must involve something besides galloping horses up staircases), and the secret assassination of the Czar Peter. And then, of course, we found that Catherine was only at the beginning of her story, her difficulties, and her greatness.

THE HOUSE OF ROTHSCHILD

We were so fascinated by the *real* story of Catherine II that we went on to read up the House of Rothschild, to see what the movies had left out about them. We went back to the private life of Henry VIII, and then we dug up that scandalous business of Elizabeth and Essex. There is a great satisfaction in knowing what really happened, on the authority of the finest group of scholars who have ever produced a work of this kind, and knowing what led up to the high spots.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

Now we come to think of it, we are going to look up Napoleon after all. We know what the Hundred Days were, but we are not too clear about how he managed to escape from Elba. And after that, we are going to get down "The Three Musketeers" and the volume on "The Thirty Years' War", and see what they were fighting about.

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The New Books

Biography

TO MY SONS. By Harold Bell Wright. Harpers. 1934. \$2.

This is the honest story of a man of the people who cherishes a forthright sympathy for "the friendless sons of men." He has tried to tell the tale of his life veraciously, for the benefit of his three sons. One cannot but have respect for the attempt.

Harold Bell Wright is one of the most widely read authors in America. He has never produced literature. He has probably never produced a really good book. But he touches the heart of the American people. He has always, as he says, "tried to stir . . . feelings of human fellowship." He is a homespun democrat, and so strongly does he feel the injustices of the present social order that the left wing would like him to become a communist. He is now devoting his time to relief work in New Mexico, and with others runs a sort of clearing-house for thousands of people made homeless by the depression.

Mr. Wright's is no cut-and-dried autobiography, it is the story of those particular times and episodes that influenced his life strongly. He makes no bones about explaining to his sons that one of the things that has led him to tell them something about their own father is "the painful and unhealing hurt" he experienced in the estrangement between himself and his paternal parent. Wright's father was a wanderer, his mother a drudge. But from the latter Wright received much. Wright himself admits that he is a confirmed sentimentalist, but he certainly had one of the toughest apprenticeships to life that can be served out to a human being. When he surveys the world today, he says in his rough-hewn way something we all in our hearts know to be true:

That this nation cannot endure with one-half exploiting the other half is just as true as that it could not live half-slave and half-free. My generation has created this monstrous situation. It is up to your generation, my sons, to see to it that not only the jobless workers have back their God-ordained right to earn their livelihood, but that the do-nothings and shirkers and grafters who take to themselves the right to live without work earn their salt.

W. R. B.

LIFE A LA HENRI. By Henri Charpentier and Boyden Sparkes. Simon & Schuster. 1934. \$3.

Stroll off Fifth Avenue toward the golden Prometheus fountain of Radio City, and along there in Rockefeller Centre you will happen on the Maison Française where one of the greatest chefs of the world, Henri Charpentier, serves delectable dishes. And in the above book you will find his savory memoirs which he has set down with the assistance of Boyden Sparkes. Henri was almost born a chef. He was page boy at Cap Martin at the age of ten. After that his life led him through the Hotel Frascati at Havre, the Savoy in London, the Café de Paris at Monte Carlo, Maxim's, Paillard's, the Plaza in New York, and other renowned hostilities. All the gourmets know Henri. He says he is an essence of all his experiences, and that in his affections and prejudices he is a consommé. He tells you in this book of the Queens and Duchesses in his life, of his adventure with Bernhardt, of the Prince of Wales and Made-moiselle Suzette, how to feed a King named Leopold, of what to do for a bride, cooking in the New World, Belasco's appetite—and, at the end of the book, he presents you, for good measure, with a number of recipes. The reviewer has been fortunate enough to eat some of Henri's dishes at the Rockefeller Plaza. And I believe that he once did serve the moon for dessert. He could do anything!

W. R. B.

Fiction

PLOWING ON SUNDAY. By Sterling North. Macmillan. 1934. \$2.50.

A curious fascination exists in the details of farm life; the monotony, the heavy drag, seem, if they are remote enough, dramatic rather than dreary. It is a little difficult not to invest life on a Southern Wisconsin farm with idyllic qualities, especially if that life is seen in the retrospective serenity of the pre-war era.

Mr. North's novel, though it makes a good effort to be real and alive, does not entirely escape this pathos of distance. A subdued air surrounds its people and events, and the atmosphere is never blown clear by any actual violence. Perhaps an

occasional patronizing manner is responsible for the flatness of effect. Everything is smoothed down, washed away by the temper of the writing. Incidents and characters, as a result, are impotent to lift the novel clear of the pastoral of church-suppers and bountiful harvest times to a more vigorous life.

Yet the book furnishes pleasant surprises. When Stud Brailsford first appears, in the light of his wife's lantern, hauling his rig through an April storm, the reader is led to expect a lusty, yowling Paul Bunyan of a farmer. Instead there emerges a strong man whose wishes and fancies and material ambitions are real and on a human scale. His defeats and successes wear the aspect of truth. So also with Early Ann, who with her name ought to be pixie-ish, but is not, and who, by the time she has gone off for a week to Chicago, has become a convincing personality. Mr. North's characters have, indeed, sufficient persuasiveness to make "Plowing on Sunday" a novel somewhat out of the ordinary. If he weren't continually having to make shift to develop his novel in serenity, so that the red noise and glare of the war could bring it to an end with dramatic effect, "Plowing on Sunday" would be a better than good novel.

K. W.

THE TEN MILLION. By Mark Hellinger. Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. \$2.50.

This is a big fat book composed of the best stories Mark Hellinger has written day by day for the New York Daily News, and he has written 365 stories a year! That's a unique columnist's assignment, and on the whole he has done remarkably well; but when you gather them up into a book and read them out of their proper ephemeral setting, the truth is they don't

stand up as well as one expected. Not that Mark Hellinger doesn't know a lot about New York. He does. He knows about many kinds of rackets, about Broadway love, the old speakeasies, the underworld, a good many famous New York characters, and he has plenty of anecdotal stories with whip endings up his sleeve. He has labored mightily in the tabloid vineyard, and his book has a racy gusto about it. He writes good journalese, and you can read what he writes very easily. You'll get through his book, and it's a large one, in no time.

The present reviewer's disappointment lies in the fact that, with memories of reading Hellinger's stuff as he galloped in and out of the Subway, he expected to find a few stories here that he could stack up against the work of Stephen Crane or O. Henry. But Hellinger isn't as good as that yet. He has a good many variegated plots, but the very nature of his tabloid work has precluded his making stories of permanent quality out of most of them. Still, we advise you to read "Hotel La Touraine," "The Perfect Plan," and several others, and you will perceive that Hellinger has a fast inshoot and a deceptive drop on the ball. It's remarkable to us that he could write stories with twists as good as these in the course of grinding out a story a day. Try that, and you'll realize how phenomenal it is!

W. R. B.

SUZY. By Herbert Gorman. Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. \$2.50.

A simple formula for the new historical novel, as adapted to modern taste, has apparently been worked out by Mr. Herbert Gorman. To one part of sheer melodrama (as befits a disciple of Dumas) he has added a plentiful quantity of the irrelevant minutiae of history, and then provided the necessary blending agent by presenting the whole as the romantic and more or less unlikely adventures of some representative foreigner, plunged unwittingly into the alarms and excursions of a crisis. Thus in "Jonathan Bishop"

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