

the habits and customs and occupations of the people, fill many pages of a work which for the first time in English historiography found space for what is too often regarded as the product of our day. In a true sense Hume was the father of the "New" history.

But most of all his style—clear, luminous, if slightly Latinized prose, with a touch here and there of Scottish influence, and more of Gallic lucidity, easy, graceful, interesting, and eminently readable—proved that, if the style is the man himself, whatever he may have lacked in scholarship he made up in mind. For he applied, as has been aptly said, intelligence to history. He wrote with judgment, insight, even humor; he made good reading out of history; good reading, still; and, with all his faults of facts, there are few faults of style. It was not learned history. No man could write the chronicle of the reigns of James I and Charles I in three years according to the scholarly standards of our time—despite the fact that Mr. Wells wrote a world history in that period. It took Professor Gardiner a lifetime to cover the ground of Hume's first volume.

In consequence the three great forces which make against historians' immortality set to work to break down Hume's long rule. The first was the changing temper of the times; the second, scholarship; the third, the altered taste in literary style. Of these charges only one will hold—he was unscholarly. "No one," observes the latest history of English literature, "now reads Hume's history." And yet—and yet, it still goes on to say, "Our more conscientious and more enlightened historians might learn much from it as regards the form in which the results of their labors might be presented; its defects in matter, therefore, are of little consequence, while its dignity, its masterly composition and its excellence of expression, render it a literary achievement of the highest order." Even that high priest of the newest school, Strachey, once declared that "one may still find entertainment and even instruction in Hume, especially in his study of the Tudors and the Stuarts." For Hume, he says, "was an extremely intelligent man, and anything he had to say on the English history could not fail to be worth attending to."

Such is the epitaph of the great eighteenth century historian and philosopher as written by the exponent of the twentieth century. It is an estimate of Hume and of his century; it may not inaptly be regarded as an estimate of Strachey and our times. In its every phrase one may perceive that its author had read and pondered Hume. It has no word of skepticism or the lack of a religious element; it has no word of Tory or of Whig; and this marks a distinction from Hume's critics of an earlier age. Hume was no orthodox Christian in an earlier sense; yet that disturbs this generation little, if at all. That he was deeply concerned with religion, his long attention to religious subjects proves. He tried his best to know and understand what that religion was. His skepticism offends this generation not at all, for it is even more skeptical than he. Nor is it now concerned with Tories or with Whigs; for its political philosophy has long since passed the limits set by them.

And yet one thing remains. In a time when what we now call "facts" threaten to overwhelm men's limited capacity to handle them and find out what they mean; when masses of information seem impossible of such literary treatment as he gave them; when statistics tend to replace the operations of the human mind; when fluent journalism supersedes the literary dignity of such history as he wrote; what then becomes of Hume? The answer has been given—no one reads his "History"—except, perhaps, people like Mr. Strachey! For the rest it remains one of those great monuments of the past, which hurrying throngs glance at and pass by. However much scholars might improve their style by studying it, they scorn it for its inaccuracies; however little the multitude may care for those inaccuracies in their current books, they shun it for its style. And both are poorer for neglect of it.

Wilbur Cortez Abbott, professor of history at Harvard University, is the author of "Conflicts with Oblivion."

A Musician in Exile

RACHMANINOFF'S RECOLLECTIONS.

As told to Oskar von Riesemann. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1934. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CHARLES ROLAND

THE war between art and propaganda is raging on every front. Currently it invests the literary scene. A while back, in the mural battle of Radio City, it centered about the painter's walls. In music it reached its acme in the breach, never healed, between Sergei Rachmaninoff and the Soviet government of Russia. Their duel, in which honors now stand about even, has outlived its usefulness.

This reviewer does not hesitate, therefore, to urge a reconciliation between the composer and his government. His absorbing volume of reminiscences betrays on every page a decided nostalgia. It is true that Rachmaninoff, jointly with Count Ilya Tolstoy, signed a letter proclaiming rancor against his government. In turn the Russian press denounced performances of his works, flinging the epithet "bourgeois" at his art. All the same, the Soviet government knows better than that, and has carefully preserved and documented his papers, compiling and publishing a brochure which Rachmaninoff himself has had to consult, to learn accurate dates for his book.

His friend, von Riesemann, has portrayed on vivid canvas, though not with any abundance of literary skill, the high state of music in Russia's pre-war years. Intense rivalry actuated the efforts of the St. Petersburg school, then deemed radical, and the Moscow school, priding itself on conservatism.

Tchaikovsky was the god of the Moscow school; his successor was Rachmaninoff, who, it may be mentioned, is a cousin of Alexander Siloti. Moscow nurtured another eminent musician, Scriabin, classmate of Rachmaninoff. The musical rulers of St. Petersburg were Rimsky-Korsakov, Moussorgsky, Borodin. Apart from this rivalry, in the scene too were Rachmaninoff's life-long friend, Chaliapin; the head of the Moscow Art Theater, Stanislavsky; and the husband of a splendid actress of the company, Chekhov.

Throughout his life Rachmaninoff has been beset by a triple quandary—was he composer, conductor, or virtuoso? Musical history, we believe, will set him down primarily as composer. But as a conductor, he attained substantial success. The urgencies of exile led him to adopt the concert platform to earn a livelihood.

His art transcends propaganda. And it yields the composer no reason to regret the concert platform. It bespeaks, too, a nobility of character which the music world has always recognized in him. On this score, the account of his relations with Scriabin merits the telling. The two, as has been said, were classmates; Rachmaninoff, highly born, served by many influential friends, winning fame and popularity at an early age. Scriabin was exceedingly poor, a dreamer and mystic.

Although cliques sought by every means to thrust one against the other, their efforts were in vain. On the sudden death of Scriabin in the early war years, Rachmaninoff went on a concert tour of Russia, confining his recitals to all-Scriabin programs. His appearance in a city filled the largest auditorium at once, so that Scriabin gained a wider audience than he had known in his lifetime.

The recollections, which laymen as well

as musicians will warmly welcome, sharply contrast with the recent biographies of the de Reszkes and Paderewski. The de Reszke brothers had retired with the war, so that their memories spanned the golden days alone. To Paderewski the world upheaval opened new doors of triumph and renown. But Rachmaninoff learned to know, after dazzling success in youth, the sorrows of exile as an emigré. An invitation home might rectify that, and in the interest of art, we hope that it will.

Romantic Science

VITALITY. By Boris Sokoloff. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by YANDELL HENDERSON

WHAT fiction is to history, and mysticism is to religion, such books as this are to science. This is not to say that the material in these pages is untrue. On the contrary it is in large part correct in regard to facts; and it presents many of the newest observations. But the facts are presented in an atmosphere like that of the scientific fiction of Jules Verne or H. G. Wells, except that their romancing is understood to be just romancing.

And yet any commuter looking for a book to fill the time until his train stops at the place where his family is summering will find these pages as enjoyable as, and much more informing than, a detective story. He will get a glimpse of Woods Hole alive with college professors and students, who spend their mornings in the laboratory and their afternoons in sea bathing and clam bakes. He will get references to the problems of vitality and senescence illustrated by reference to William James, to the Roosevelts, both T. R. and F. D., to Goethe, to Tolstoy, and to a number of men who have lived much longer and done less. Then he will be supplied with a chapter on lower organism well chopped up along with some hormones and endocrines, and particularly the "gland of life," the adrenals. He will read how John Huss was burned in 1415; how Wagner Jauregg applied malaria to the treatment of syphilis of the brain, and W. R. Whitney developed the "high frequency electric fever machine."

Next he will read of Lundsgaard's discovery that the formation of lactic acid is prevented by idioacetic acid; and will follow the trail through Liebig in his laboratory at Munich to Napoleon dying of cancer on St. Helena. He will skim through fatigue and relaxation and lactic acid as an intestinal antiseptic produced by the bacillus bulgaricus and the bacillus acidophilus, and on to the "revolt of the cells" in cancer and the work of Warburg and Rous. All of which leads to "a few concluding words on the amazing potentialities in human bodies, never yet fully exploited, because of our lack of knowledge of the Use of Self."

Dr. Sokoloff is stated on the inside of the paper cover of his book to be a physiologist, formerly Professor of Experimental Medicine at Lesgraft's University and a member of the Institute of Science at Petrograd, who has devoted his activity to research on cancer. He has worked in the past as a guest at the Rockefeller Institute, at the Cancer Institute of Columbia University, and at the George Washington University Medical School. At the present time he is associated with the organization of the International Cancer Prophylactic Institute.

Yandell Henderson is professor of applied physiology at Yale University.



RACHMANINOFF READING THE PROOF OF HIS THIRD CONCERTO
From "Rachmaninoff's Recollections."

Dean Gauss Writes of America's Destiny

A PRIMER FOR TOMORROW. By Christian Gauss. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by J. C. LONG

THE significance of Dean Gauss's book lies in the fact that it is not solely concerned with economic recovery. It goes back to the primary question: What is the chief end of man?

Spengler, Siegfried, Salter, and other foreigners have contributed ably to our knowledge of the current scene. Dean Gauss with his mid-West upbringing is able to understand more fully the racial overtones and undertones which enter into American thought and action. He is aware that our temperament is emotional, illogical, and opportunist. He knows that we will not accept the communist evangel in its complete Russian form, because we could never embrace so logical a state. He will not concede that Spengler's pessimistic conclusions are inevitable, because he believes that a people draws strength from the conviction of the value of its civilization. A vital belief in our destiny could defeat a Spenglerian decay.

The regenerative power of "A Primer for Tomorrow" appears as it evokes the reader's sense of proportion. Dean Gauss reminds us that the laws and shape of civilization have changed drastically from time to time during the several thousand years of civilized man. Feudal society knew little of money or credits. The rise of capitalism with its structure of corporations, interest, and deification of private profit, is a recent thing. If it fails to recover, that failure is no blow to the essential stability of man.

The changed condition of man today, moreover, and his real crisis, are to be found in the alteration of his ideas on the meaning of life. From the apogee of Greece to the Reformation, man's reliance was on divinity, Pagan or Christian. He rested on the verities of the past, secure in revealed religion. Then Protestantism (which also influenced even if it did not conquer the Roman communion) gave to man the burden of conscience.

The Protestant ethic, with its magnification of the individual, thrived in the expansive Ages of Discovery. Man's view shifted from the past to the future; and the belief in a developing future, in America at least, was justified continuously.

The modern age carried germs which grew to threaten its destruction. Nationalism once brought peace through uniting smaller groupings, but with the crowding of the world the nations in reaching out for more space are doubly perilous because of their very size.

Science has brought increase of knowledge and material facilities. But science as an evangel is arid and false. The notion that the chief end and inner nature of man were definable by material measurement raised havoc with popular faith and paved the way for the gospel of material success which reached its zenith in the 1920's. This last gospel is now taken from us.

Man can no longer live in the past, in tradition, because the current era differs sharply from its predecessors. He cannot live in rosy dreams of the future because the days to come are a blank. The test of civilization today lies far less in the technique of recovery than in the ability of man to evolve a satisfactory credo, while he reshapes his material world.

Dean Gauss has done much more than to describe our quandary. In pages which bristle with potential controversy he presents the goal of "commodious living" and challenges the forces which he believes oppose it. "A Primer for Tomorrow" is one of the most stirring adventures of the mind which have been provided in our time, a Sibylline book for our threatened civilization.

The John Newbery Medal for "the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children" has been awarded for this year to Cornelia Meigs, author of "Invincible Louisa: the Story of the Author of 'Little Women.'" The award was made at the Montreal Conference of the American Library Association.

The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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Give the Public a Chance

The motion picture industry, which seems to have been plunged into gloom by the determination of the churches to purge it of some of its more sensational features, is taking humanity at its lowest worth if it sees disaster in this clipping of its wings. For what the public wants—as has been said a million times before—is not necessarily the shocking; it wants the romantic, the piquant, even the familiar, something through which it can either escape from the commonplace, or effect that transfer of perspective which makes the commonplace the romantic. It would be folly, of course, to deny the appeal the salacious has for many, and the eagerness with which many more respond to the titillation of their appetite for the sensational, but it none the less remains true that the public has proved again and again, in the case both of literature and the stage, that the belief that what the dear people want is excitation rather than excitement rests with those who provide entertainment for them rather than in themselves. The public-be-damned attitude is one thing, the public be kowtowed to is another; in between is the sane point of view which takes into account tastes, preferences, and needs, and steers a course between the Scylla of arbitrary regimentation and the Charybdis of pandering to unworthy instincts.

Most persons are incurable romantics at soul. And most persons, no matter how prosaic their wont, give the romanticizing instinct play at times. Some there are whose flights of fancy are almost indistinguishable from their working moods, since romance for them means merely the extension to successful realization of the ambitions which animate their day. Others translate themselves from the world of reality to that of an existence beyond the field of their normal activities. But both respond to the something that lifts them out of a rut and lends color and excitement to life.

Who holds by Thee hath Heaven in fee
To gild his dross thereby.

It is only the intellectual, of course, who rationalizes this attraction of the bizarre, the picturesque, or the grandiose as the desire for escape. The man in the street merely knows he wants to be diverted, and when he is diverted is well pleased. If motion-picture producers were psychologists instead of merely superficial observers of popular reactions, they would discover a hundred byways to the entertainment of the masses instead of following monotonously along the main travelled roads. Life for most of the world is a pretty drab affair, and any window to the unusual offers prospect of relief. It does not need the startling to lift man out of himself, but merely the interesting or the stimulating.

When it comes to the matter of securing material the motion picture industry is a hundred times blessed, for it has not only the raw material of the actual world to draw on, but, ready to its use, a wealth of literature capable of conversion for the screen that can meet the quirks of the most chameleon public taste. The screen, indeed, has in literature a fairy godmother whose largesse can indefinitely be counted

upon. The great classics of humor have as yet hardly been touched; the possibilities of folklore and myth have scarcely been approached; the historical novel has been merely brushed in passing. A dozen stories, poems, or novels that have all the elements which have carried feeble scenarios to success, spring instantly to mind. There are hundreds more that could easily be named, and that would seem to have been neglected merely because of the fear that they might prove above the crude tastes which the producer regards as standard. Let the poor public have a chance. If the churches are going to take away the unhealthily sensational, let the commercial producers feed the instinct for melodrama and romance instead on some of the tales of adventure and love and grotesquerie whose popularity as literature over a period of years has proved their pulling power with the masses. There ought to be skill enough to adapt these to the screen without losing their flavor. And then perhaps literature as well as the public will be the gainer in that audiences will turn from the motion pictures to read the books from which they were drawn.



"DADDY'S BEEN TRANSLATED INTO THE SCANDINAVIAN."

Letters to the Editor: Booksellers in Reply to Our Editorial of June 23

From the A. B. A. President

SIR:—As president of the American Booksellers Association I would be tremendously interested in the publication of a list of "books, good books, books worth reading and worth buying" referred to in your editorial of June 23. Our association would be delighted to have such a list, particularly if you would be willing to see that it was posted in a prominent place in every village post office and public gathering place. We booksellers have evidently been wrong all along; we have been stocking our shelves with the books that people wanted and were willing to buy when we should have concentrated on the good, solid, worth while books that people ought to read but somehow never got around to. The beautiful Utopian picture of the Americans who would no longer have to go to England, France, and Germany in order to get a real armful of books, but who could within a short distance from home purchase enough books to make them stagger, would bring tears of joy to the eyes of every bookseller possessed of one of your magical lists. It hasn't been any fun to see people pretending to stagger out of bookstores with a copy of "Anthony Adverse."

No, my dear Mr. Editor, we fear that the trouble does not lie with the American bookshops but with the great American public that doesn't know that bookshops sell books. They have been fooled so often, they go to a drug store to buy drugs and are confronted with books; they go to a tea room for a bite to eat and again find books, even in banks and steamship offices, hardware stores and florists—always books. Is it any wonder that on passing a bookstore they clutch their pocketbooks and pass by with averted heads, thinking that they might be lured into buying an electric refrigerator, French underwear or five gallons of gasoline?

You have had your picture of the ideal bookshop, it is only fair that we should have ours. It is about the size of the Congressional Library with a large annex, say the new building that houses the NRA. It is backed financially by the Federal Reserve System. In it is every volume that anyone might possibly ask for. National legislation makes it necessary for everyone to read at least one book a week that they ought to read and three they want to read. Just to show that booksellers have decent feelings we will insist that with

every sale will go a copy of your *Review* telling each and every customer just what they ought to select next week.

E. S. McCawley.

Haverford, Pa.

The Booksellers' Position

SIR:—The bitter attack on American bookselling in your editorial of June 23 will strike all those who have had actual connection with this industry as both ill-timed and ill-informed.

You contend that the bookstore does nothing for the good old classics. What, then, does make possible the issuing of "Lavengro," for example, in a current dollar edition? Not, surely, the reviewing mediums, but the displays in the ordinary garden variety of bookstores. You have overlooked the real difficulty of the bookseller whose impulses are to run a bookstore of both current and bookish interest, which is that the teaching practice of secondary schools and colleges drains off from the student any real enthusiasm for worthwhile reading. The old generation of bookish readers is not replaced with present buyers. The reason many good old books are not on bookstore shelves is because they are not known or wanted and would not be recognized or bought even if pushed into the hands of inquiring customers today. When Yale finds a Phelps and Harvard a Copeland they do well to congratulate themselves and booksellers may well have new hope.

You suggest that the bookseller should stock Dodsley's "Select Collection" and Bartram's "Travels" if he wishes to prosper, as those titles are "more likely to be the books desired" at the bookish bookstore than Marco Polo, "Moby Dick," or Emerson's Essays, which we all carry. Can we infer that you have in mind second-hand bookstores, only? There are many such, in this country as well as in England, but they do not seem to be prospering overwell, either; and their costs of selling are far more than ours.

You would have us feel apologetic for featuring "books on politics and current economics." We don't apologize and we are glad that we can have any part in interesting the public in that kind of reading. And you suggest that we must blush if we handle novels, as "such books are commercial commodities, published for an immediate need and almost valueless when that need is satisfied." Well, the booksellers have helped to make the great novels

of the present generation known to hundreds of thousands of new and growing readers. Some of these may well be the classics of the next period of literary history and we do not regret that we failed to sell an occasional copy of Dodsley's "Select Collection" instead. Fifty detective stories, it is reported, are to be on the President's cruiser for his vacation, and perhaps no copy of Bartram's "Travels," (which you believe he would have selected if in Washington there had been any "real bookshop for the people who care for books.")

But the most unfortunate and regrettable part of your editorial was not essential to your chief criticism; yet the ordinary reader will inevitably magnify the minor detail of your argument and ignore your main point. He will seize upon the idea that he is not serving his own interests when he patronizes an independent bookstore, which "cannot be run on a low overhead" and "cannot sell current books cheaply and survive." The only meaning of this, to most people, would be that they must pay too much, unnecessarily, in a bookstore and that somewhere there exists a medium which can sell books at lower cost and would do so, to their advantage and gain, if not artificially restrained. But this is not the fact. No greater misconception or misrepresentation could be made in so few words. It is the large scale chain stores or sections of department stores, to which you point as the ideally effective commercial mediums, that cannot sell current books cheaply and survive, because it costs too much to sell them there.

Where did you get your data from which you concluded that the independent bookstores cost more to run than the average retail business, whether in a department store or elsewhere? You echo the misinformed popular idea, based upon current plausible but misleading propaganda that cannot be substantiated. The average cost of selling books in an independent bookstore has been shown by the Harvard Survey Reports to be 2% to 5% less than in the best-managed book departments of department stores.

The gross margin between cost to the bookseller and the selling price of books is limited and the owner-operated bookstore must operate within that limit, which is less than for almost any other line of merchandise comparable with books. The printed statistics issued by the National Retail Dry Goods Association, based upon the audited reports of all their members, show the operating cost of book departments (including depreciation, obsolescence, and share of administration expense) is greater than the gross margin of profit possible even if books are bought in quantity and sold at full prices. Nothing is to be gained by quoting in this place the exact figures, which are easily available to those who can properly understand and use them.

Because the book department is supposed to bring into the store a desirable class of general customers, the cost of operating that department is covered by profit in other merchandise that can be made to show a wider margin. And you will find that the percentage cost and loss

(Continued on page 810)

The Saturday Review recommends

This Group of Current Books:

HITLER OVER EUROPE. By ERNST HENRI. Simon & Schuster. An account of the origin, philosophy, and future of the Nazi party.

RACHMANINOFF'S RECOLLECTIONS. As told to Oskar von Rieseemann. Macmillan. The biography of the composer and pianist.

AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON. By MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV. Knopf. A novel of Cossack Russia.

This Less Recent Book:

THE JOURNEY INWARD. By KURT HAUSER. Viking. A tale of adventure, actual and spiritual, in darkest Africa.