

The BOWLING GREEN

Granules From An Hour-Glass

HERE are many pleasures waiting for the reader of Edith Wharton's volume of reminiscences, *A Backward Glance*. I was prejudiced in favor of Mrs. Wharton's delightful book from the very start, for I noticed that in her brief preface she quoted Madame Swetchine, an admirable writer of whom one rarely hears. I encountered Mme. Swetchine's *Letters* years ago, doing some college reading in the history of the French Republic of '48, and I always experience a special pleasure in meeting anyone who has even heard of her. She (I refer still to Mme. Swetchine) is one of those felicitously unfamous writers who have been divinely shielded from being read by the wrong people.—Incidentally Mrs. Wharton's parents, during a trip to Europe in their early married days, saw the flight of old Louis Philippe across the Tuileries gardens.

And Edith Wharton herself—how easily she might never have been a writer at all. She was reared under handicap, as a member of the dress circle of New York's provincial and complacent little bourgeoisie sixty years ago. I had always been a trifle alarmed by repeated allusions in print to Mrs. Wharton's background of social azure, so it was a relief to learn that it was nothing more serious than the Rhinelanders and Joneses (of West 23rd Street and Hell Gate). For one has never been able to be wholly solemn about the tradition of New York "society" unless by that term you mean such people as Irving, Bryant, Whitman, Melville, Poe. And, as Mrs. Wharton points out with most urbane humor, bohemians like those were scarcely recognized in the fashionable world of her youth. The worthies of that time, who were proud of not being in retail trade, all had "libraries" of calf-bound books regarded as "standard," but would be painfully agitated if called upon to meet an actual author. This, Mrs. Wharton very shrewdly suggests, was not from any sense of snobbish superiority, but rather a genuine shyness or embarrassment—"an awe-struck dread of the intellectual effort that might be required." And what has been so much and so foolishly hallooed as New York "society" was probably only a swath of kind, simple, innocent and rather self-indulgent people; intensely timid and conventional at heart. If one pauses to reflect upon the dullness, architectural misery, parochial naiveté and self-satisfaction of New York in the 70's and 80's one must realize that our bewildering and pinnacled uncertainty of today has its merits.

I didn't mean to get into argument; merely to say that Mrs. Wharton, with extraordinary patience and courage, overcame the most serious obstacles; obstacles perhaps more deadening to the soul than poverty or mean birth. The happy accident of living abroad several years as a child gave her a valuable disgust for the banality of New York's architecture; the somewhat prudish Anglophilia of her parents implanted a sensitive gust for Eng-

lish undefiled. In the American children's books of the day, her mother said, the children spoke bad English *without the author's knowing it*. (Which was perfectly true; it is not until much later that one learns bad English has its uses too.)

I can scarcely imagine the youngest generation, hotfoot upon its own desperations, taking time to read Mrs. Wharton's very wise and moving book; yet it might start some interesting thoughts if they did. Among many charming things her glimpses of Henry James are particularly interesting. We see Mrs. Wharton as a young person, putting on a new hat and a pretty dress to meet the great Henry, but so appalled by her shyness that she could not speak—and the new hat was not even noticed. We see James suffering grotesquely from a heat wave in Lenox and finding his only relief in constant motoring: how one would have loved to see that party pausing in roadside shade to read Swinburne aloud while Mr. James perspired. We hear James talking about "the Emmetry" (so he called "his vast and labyrinthine cousinship") and in lengthy soliloquy bringing them alive to a group of hearers on a summer evening. "They glimmered at us," Mrs. Wharton says, "through a series of disconnected ejaculations, epithets, allusions, parenthetical rectifications and re-statements . . . and then, suddenly, by some miracle of shifted lights and accumulated strokes, there they stood before us, sharp as an Ingres, dense as a Rembrandt."—Or James at Lamb House in Rye, welcoming his visitors at the front door; James's firm and risible belief that he knew best how to direct the chauffeur to find the destination yet always missing the way—and only succeeding to confuse the yokel whom he asked for direction. This is surely of excellent symbolic purport. James, under the stroke that killed him, in the very act of falling hearing a voice that seemed to say, "So here it is at last, the distinguished thing." Always terrified of death (and of much of living too) yet he could meet it with his own absolute word. There is a very distinguished thing to be found and honored in Mrs. Wharton's book, I hope many will discover it.

Her descriptions of James's conversation—and humor—are exquisitely happy. Peter Dunne, she tells us, was perturbed by the Jacobite circumlocutions, and felt like saying "Just spit it right up in Poppa's hand," but—

to James's intimates these elaborate hesitations, far from being an obstacle, were like a cobweb bridge flung from his mind to theirs, an invisible passage over which one knew that silver-footed ironies, veiled jokes, tiptoed malices, were stealing to explode a huge laugh at one's feet. This moment of suspense, in which there was time to watch the forces of malice and merriment assembling over the mobile landscape of his face, was perhaps the rarest of all in the unique experience of a talk with Henry James.

And surely I shall long remember her description of James sitting by the moat at Bodiam Castle, watching the reflection of the towers and the hovering dragonflies. "For a long time no one spoke; then James turned to me and said solemnly:

'Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.'

Of another struggler with the English language there was unexpected echo the other day. At the dedication of the Memorial Library in honor of Joseph Conrad, at the Seamen's Institute in New York, I had the good fortune to meet Jean Louis d'Esque who was carpenter in the *Torrens* during Conrad's last days of command. Mr. d'Esque spoke, as so many have, of Conrad's unusual length of arm; and said that these long arms were the more noticeable because he wore conspicuous paper cuffs. Whenever anyone—passenger or crew—used a word unfamiliar to Conrad he swiftly noted it on his cuff, memorized it and made it his own.



FROM A PRINT BY HOKUSAI

In Charlie McLean's bookstore in Dayton, Ohio, a few weeks ago, I discovered some inexpensive reproductions of Japanese prints. I can't resist inserting here, however imperfectly, one by Hokusai which seemed to me irresistibly symbolic of the Book Trade crossing the Great Depression.

I print today the correct solution of the Sherlock Holmes crossword puzzle. (Bowling Green, May 19.) Up to the time of this week's issue going to press, six answers had been received which were exact in every respect. These were from:

M. S. Packard (Brooklyn); Stuart Robertson (Philadelphia); Harvey Officer (N. Y. City); Walter Klinefelter (Glen Rock, Pa.); Vincent Starrett (Chicago); Emily S. Coit (Pensacola, Fla.)

The strictly correct answer in 31 across should be *let*, but as the middle letter is unkeyed and *lit* would also be a reasonable answer, solutions offering this, and otherwise entirely letter-perfect, are acceptable and were submitted by:—

Elmer Davis (N. Y. City); Mrs. C. C. Williams (South Hamilton, Mass.); C. Warren Force (N. Y. City); Allan M. Price (N. Y. City); J. DeLancey Ferguson (Cleveland); Velma Long (Winamac, Indiana).

Solutions which were almost wholly correct, but failed in one word only, submitted by:—

Earle Walbridge (N. Y. City); Katharine A. Fellows (Cummington, Mass.); W. S. Hall (N. Y. City); Harrison L. Reinke (Lakeville, Conn.); George Lowther (N. Y. City); Laurence P. Dodge (N. Y. City); R. K. Leavitt (N. Y. City); Malcolm Johnson (Garden City, L. I.)

A number of correspondents pointed out that Mr. Tobias Gregson was in error (in the clue to 16 down) in speaking of "Mr. Chelverton Smith." They remark that it should be "Culverton Smith," and the correction seems just.

Mr. Vincent Starrett accompanied his solution with the interesting news that Constable (London) is to publish in June a volume *Baker Street Studies*, edited by Harold Bell. Mr. Starrett says: "Contributors include Dorothy Sayers, Fr. Ronald Knox, S. C. Roberts, Vernon Rendall, A. G. Macdonell, Helen Simpson, Bell himself and V. S. Knox has done a paper on *Mycroft*; I have written at considerable length on *Mrs. Hudson* and her entourage. The others deal with highly specialized matters: Miss Sayers, I believe, has settled the argument about Holmes's college career (in favor of Cambridge), and Helen Simpson has shown up poor old Watson's professional limitations."

I cannot help hoping that whoever publishes this alluring volume on this side will put on it the imprint of the Baker

Street Irregulars. Mycroft's crossword puzzle would make an appropriate appendix.

A sign in a Broadway modiste's announces "Active and Spectator Garments" which is an ingenious dichotomy—though probably the word dichotomy should be used only for trousers. Mr. H. L. Mencken, now at work on his *Encyclopedia of Quotations*, paused long enough to estimate the number of words he has written for print. He reckons it at ten million. Our Scottish clientele are much pleased to know that Drambuie, the liqueur favored by Bonnie Prince Charlie, "a Link with the '45," is now virtuously obtainable in these parts. The recipe was brought over from France by a French companion of the Prince in 1745 and given to The Mackinnon of Strathaird when he assisted Charlie to escape after Culloden.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

The Heritage of Marx

WHAT MARX REALLY MEANT. By G. D. H. Cole. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934. \$2.

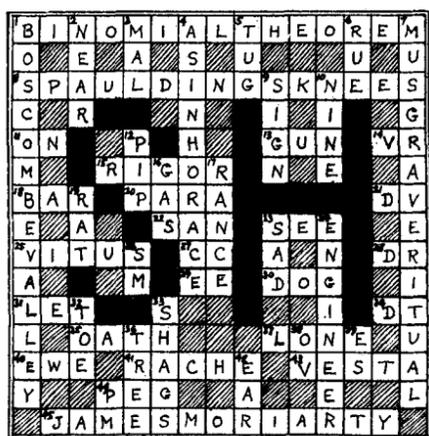
Reviewed by SIDNEY HOOK

THIS book represents a brave attempt to break with the tradition of Marxist orthodoxy and to evaluate what is living and what is dead in the Marxian intellectual heritage. The author, following the lead of those who have been called experimental Marxists, stresses the central importance of Marx's method as distinct from any one of his specific doctrines. In a book of such compass, heavier documentation on moot points would have been advisable. Indeed such documentation is positively desirable in view of the literary practices of certain critics who accuse Marxists of reading Marx like a Bible but who, when confronted with an exposition which makes sense of Marx, read Marx like a Bible themselves and seize upon every turn of phrase and word in his writings in order to prove that what makes sense cannot have been what Marx meant.

Mr. Cole has not only liberated himself from Marxolatry but from that fetishism of terms in the Marxian tradition which makes the writings of Marxists so formula ridden and dreary. He is not at all abashed to employ the phrase "the realistic interpretation of history" instead of "the materialistic interpretation" whose misleading connotations are so notorious. He underscores the social and ethical presuppositions of the theory of value and does not hesitate to speak out in open disagreement with the founders of Marxism and even more often with the self-anointed latter-day saints. He tries to refine the conception of class and admits the ambiguity which clusters around the use of that notion in most orthodox Marxian writing.

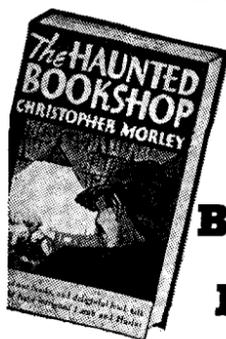
Mr. Cole's most significant achievement in this book is to convey to his readers a healthy sense of the complexity of the data which Marxism considers in its analysis, and of the necessity of not only acknowledging the existence and reciprocal influence of non-economic factors upon the economic, but of actually attempting to investigate the conditions, forms, and consequences of that reciprocity.

The chief weakness of Mr. Cole's work is that he has approached the difficult problem of understanding the historical past too naively. The significance of the past, and of any man's work in the past, does not lie ready to hand on the calendar surface of events or in the plain meaning of texts, especially when they make neither a unified nor a consistent whole. On the other hand, there is no justified canon by which we can read any significance or any interpretation into the past merely on the ground that it appears to be plausible in the present. The real task consists in critically tracing the development of Marx's thought in relation to the practical problems of revolutionary action from 1842 on, and to the social philosophies and cultural attitudes which bore upon those problems and which he opposed. Franz Mehring has come nearest to writing such a book; the ideal book, however, is still in the limbo of the unborn.



FOR THE Graduate

we suggest . . .



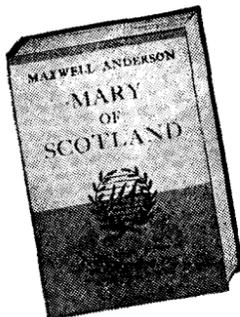
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By ZORA NEALE HURSTON

How Old Is Old?

Old Age has long fascinated that youthful octogenarian, Dr. Johnson Brigham, since '98 State Librarian of Iowa. In 1905, at the discreet age of 59, he wrote *An Old Man's Idyl*. "I was just a kid then," he chuckles now, and has embodied his mature reflections in an engaging volume, *The Youth of Old Age*, published this week. He wittily tells how to lead a long life and a happy one, quoting in support of his recipe some 300 authors, ranging from Homer to Hervey Allen. He agrees with Anacreon: "This I know, without being told, 'tis time to live, if I grow old." *The Youth of Old Age* is a wise and genial book, bristling with good humor and good sense: an admirable gift or armchair companion. \$2.50 at your bookseller's. Marshall Jones Company, Boston.

Origins of the Gospels

THE FOUR GOSPELS: A New Translation. By Charles Cutler Torrey. New York: Harpers & Bros. \$3.

Reviewed by EDGAR J. GOODSPEED

PROFESSOR TORREY, a distinguished member of the Semitic faculty at Yale, has long contended that the gospels were first written not in Greek, as we have them, but in Aramaic. He now offers a new translation of the Greek text, altered here and there as he supposes what he believes to have been the original Aramaic requires. This is followed by an extended essay on the view of gospel origins that underlies it. Notes on the verses chiefly affected conclude the book.

Of course, much that the gospels report was obviously first uttered in Aramaic, which prevailed among the Jews of Palestine in Jesus's day. But it is Dr. Torrey's contention that Matthew, Mark, and John, and the sources of Luke, were actually composed in Aramaic in Palestine, for Jewish readers, between 40 and 60 A.D., being presently translated into Greek, as the church became more and more Greek. The gospel stories, he declares, first circulated orally, and then were written down; then were recirculated orally and again written down; then out of this mass of Aramaic material, Mark was written, in Aramaic, about 40. The writer of Matthew, a little later, had for his work Mark and its sources. John was a Jerusalem gospel, written about 60, by a man who probably knew both Mark and Matthew, certainly the sources of both. Luke seems to have written his gospel in Greek, or rather to have translated it from certain Hebrew and Aramaic documents that he assembled.

As the Christian movement became more and more Greek, the three Aramaic gospels were translated into that tongue, but all four were equally translations, according to Professor Torrey. "It makes no difference which evangelist is translating," but, "John wrote his Greek with more freedom than Mark or Luke."

The origin of the Greek forms of the gospels is a matter of some interest, but here Professor Torrey is a little vague. The translator of Matthew had the Greek Mark before him, and Luke (in 60) had the Greek Mark and the Greek Matthew before him. Each generally followed the Greek wording of his predecessor. Dr. Torrey is clearly leaving nothing to chance. In general, each evangelist has all his predecessors and all their sources, and each translator has the previously translated gospels to guide him. This ought to cover every possible resemblance. But the differences of course become all the more difficult.

The fundamental fault with this whole extremely intricate scheme is that it is postulated in a vacuum: the supposed book writing public of first century Palestine. How many writers this theory postulates! The writers of the first stratum reports, the writers of the second stratum reports, the writers of the gospels. But when called upon to name the Aramaic documents of this period with which he claims to compare New Testament idiom, Professor Torrey wanders as far as the fifth century B.C. for parallels. This is like resorting to Wyclif for present-day English usage. He speaks easily of fifth, fourth, and second century materials as of "the same period"; so little do five or six centuries of change matter to his method. He also talks loosely of the Aramaic originals of certain Septuagint books, as though he actually had those originals before him for comparison. But of course he has not, but only Greek translations of them, from which he conjectures the Aramaic idiom of the lost originals. These desperate expedients are resorted to because there is no contemporary Aramaic literature with which to compare first century gospels. But modern translations of the New Testament are based upon Greek manuscripts actually extant, dating from the third and fourth centuries, and accessible to students everywhere. They have nothing in common with Dr. Torrey's visionary version.

Dr. Torrey's Aramaic gospels in short do not exist. The contemporary Aramaic documents from which he seeks to derive their supposed style do not exist. But Greek papyri do exist in great numbers from the very decades which witnessed the writing of the gospels, and the colloquial usage of these absolutely authentic and dated originals parallels to a surprising degree the phraseology of the gospels. The bearing of this fact is obvious.

Dr. Torrey has no concern with the specific genius of the individual gospels; they sound very much alike to him. He seems

to miss the individual meaning of each. Even the strongly dialogic character of John is unreflected in his version. The supposed mistranslations of supposed Aramaic originals are much less troublesome to competent Greek students than he can realize. His nonsensical or incredible readings, as he calls them, are too often not from the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, but from the English Revised Version of 1881. It is that translation, rather than the Greek text, that has confused Professor Torrey, a fact that tells its own story.

No, the Aramaic circles in which Christianity began were not given to writing books. Three great Jews wrote in the first century, Philo, Paul, Josephus; and they wrote in Greek! And the New Testament is the literary precipitate deposited by the Christian movement when it impinged upon the Greek world.

Edgar A. Goodspeed, a member of the faculty of the University of Chicago, is one of the best known authorities on the Bible in this country, and the author of a translation of the Scriptures into modern style.

A Lance for the King

OLD ROWLEY: A Private Life of Charles II. By Dennis Wheatley. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1934. \$2.75.

Reviewed by J. B. McCULLOCH

THAT so much biographical writing has recently been bestowed upon King Charles the Second need not surprise us. Once the infallibility of Whig criticism was challenged, once the representation of Charles as a fleshless symbol for irresponsible autocracy was disallowed, another portrait emerged in its place, of a rich and subtle personality. Both Charles and the Restoration England over which he ruled yield themselves gracefully to study.

The latest writer to splinter a lance for his King is the young novelist, Mr. Dennis Wheatley, whose "Old Rowley" is a brief and tidily written introductory sketch, frankly designed to stimulate our curiosity rather than to satisfy it. Mr. Wheatley's political bias is evident from the disdain with which he refers to Parliament as a "House of Talkers," and the relish with which he quotes the King—"Better one master than five hundred."

Mr. Wheatley's book is not as prudently critical as Mr. David Loth's, nor does it approach for descriptive power the magnificent artistry of Mr. Arthur Bryant's "Charles II," which, spicily redolent of the age, will doubtless remain the best single volume work on Charles and his England.

Balancing Personality

RECREATING ONESELF. By Gerald Stanley Lee. Northampton, Mass: The Coördination Guild. \$2.50.

Reviewed by DONALD A. LAIRD

SHELLACKED to the wall of my sun-room, the better to brighten the spirit as well as the eyes, is a letter from a distressed soul in bleak Nova Scotia. What is the nature of all things, he enquired? Is life worth living? Why isn't the savage troubled with a complaint widespread among human bowels? And, later, where can he obtain work at a high salary with little exertion?

A puzzler to answer at the time of its receipt, I now know how to straighten out his many-sided troubles—he should read "Recreating Oneself." This will likely give him the grip he needs on a wavering reality, if any book can give it. If reality were not already tottering for him, I fear the book might, contrariwise, make some of life's foundation appear to be propped up by sponge rubber. But I am confident my Nova Scotian friend would understand and probably profit for a time.

In swift-flowing, effortless style, Mr. Lee dramatizes the merits of effortless work in overcoming gravity through muscular rhythm and balance acquired by carrying an orange on one's head. Backward persons may need the orange in the actual pulpy sphere, but those with advanced control should be able to carry merely the spirit of the orange, like a seal with an ectoplasmic rubber ball.

The restraints of the germ-plasm and the gnawings of the neurasthenic, personal experience and observations convince him, can be set at near zero when the floating exercises—all with that orange poised above the central commissure—have been mastered, mastered in spirit as well as in crass mechanical detail. Thus does self-control unseat genetics by applying the methods of Spencerian penmanship to the whole man, body and soul.

There is a hypnotic-like fascination in Mr. Lee's enthusiastic weaving of words and homely example that can both convince and mislead, as though a Bernarr McFadden had become smooth-tongued, or a Mary Eddy had turned chiropractor.

Like Bobby Jones's advice to the duffer, however, it may actually work, although we know not why. In the work of the Gilbreths, Edmund Jacobsen, G. T. W. Patrick, and neuropsychiatry he might have found a substantial basis for organizing his experience. The critical reader should do this, there may be too much meat in the book to be discarded.

The old challenge

LEARN
TO WRITE!

IT may sound bromidic to many of you, but Dorothea Brande has freshened it up this season in a little book which has been slipping out of our office at the rate of 250 a week (exhausting the first printing sans ballyhoo); and bringing into the files such astonishing comments as these:

"Positively the best book for a beginning writer I have ever come across.—William Rose Benét, *Saturday Review*.

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