

## Selling the Oxford Group Movement

*I WAS A PAGAN.* By V. C. Kitchen. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1934. \$1.50.

Reviewed by ALBERT CLARKE WYCKOFF

THIS new book of the Oxford Group Movement bids fair to surpass the popularity of "For Sinners Only." Like that, it tells the story of a changed life. This convert, however, instead of being an English journalist, is a very successful American advertising man doing business at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, New York City. It is curious how the Holy Spirit selects such practical writers to present the Oxford Group Movement to the general public! At least they are not "highbrow." There is nothing new in the conversion experience of the author, it is "The Old, Old Story." And since the confessional details of previous pagan living are abundant, and nothing new is told about the Oxford Group Movement, we shall pass over these features and turn immediately to the unique contribution of Mr. Kitchen's book. It lies in the fact that a very clever, well-educated, psychologically dissatisfied, partially pagan, advertising man comes under the influence of the Oxford Group Movement, and experiences a changed life so remarkable that he finds in it the key to the solution of all the problems to which humanity is heir.

The genuineness of the author's conversion experience, his evident sincerity, and his high purpose to change for the better the lives of individuals and the life of the home, the church, the state, business, the world—all combine to make us reluctant to offer any disturbing word of criticism. But we have caught just enough of the author's passion for "absolute truth," and his newly acquired moral indignation against the wrongs of high-pressure advertising, to make it impossible to resist these moral forces in their reactions to this book. Hence, what follows.

The fact that Mr. Kitchen is so thoroughly sold on the Oxford Group Movement himself makes his endeavor to sell it to others a task to which he brings all the varied gifts of his life and experience, together with the resources of his highly specialized profession. The title, "I Was A Pagan," is the natural creation of the advertising man's mental work-pattern, which is the "Before and After Using" display idea. This furnishes the literary form around which the material of the book is organized. And it opens the way for the author to slip over unconsciously from the facts he has at his disposal to the fictionalizing of his emotional appeal. This practice becomes almost inevitable because the Oxford Group Movement technique is organized around five absolutes—all of which are fictions.

Mr. Kitchen cannot resist contrasting what he was before his conversion with what he has become. On pages 89-90 he presents the following parallels:

| <i>In My Old Life</i> | <i>In My New Life</i>                               |
|-----------------------|---|
| I most liked:         | I most like:  |
| Myself                | God   |
| I hated most:         | I hate most:  |
| Poverty (for myself)  | Sin. Self, because "I" is the middle letter of SIN. |

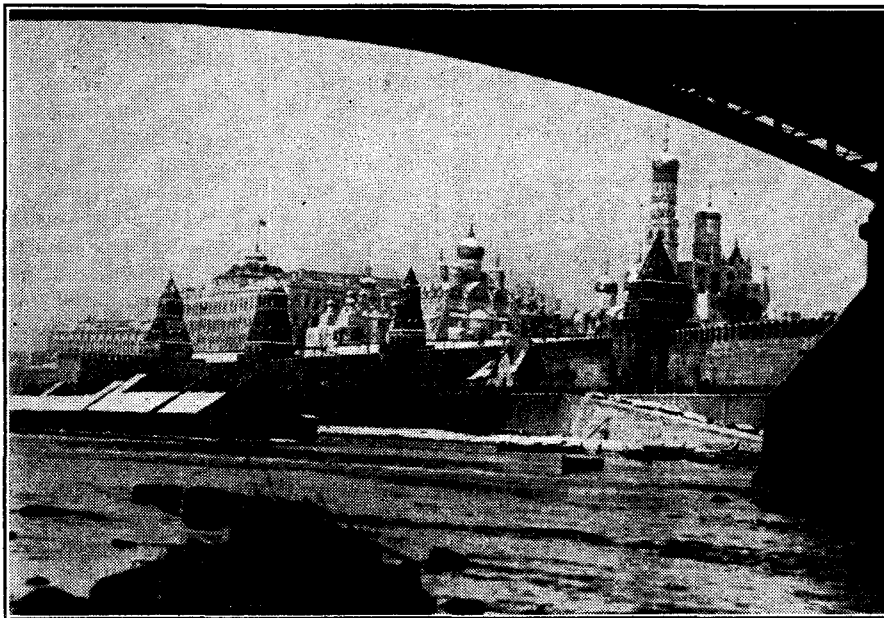
It is easy to see that these absolutes are over-simplifications of the real problem. Psychology recognizes this fact. The "I" that was the center of his pagan life in sin, has not entirely disappeared in this present book. To be absolutely honest in the matter, the modest, humble, agnostic "I" of Mr. Kitchen's pagan days seems like a pygmy by the side of the new, confident, pangnostic "I" in his God-and-I combination which lends him the assurance to sweep away with a gesture all philosophy, ethics, science, theology, church, and psychology, and offer in its place the knowledge that is to be derived from direct God-guidance. The old seasoned theologian cannot repress a smile when this lay child of less than five years in the Faith, casually explains the Trinity in a passing moment. And the reviewer wonders whether it is quite fair to God to hold Him responsible for the philosophy, ethics, science, and psychology, as well as the

theology and ecclesiology of this author. But one cannot escape from this new self-assurance, well expressed in this passage:

And the Holy Ghost Himself would always have remained . . . a power God could not trust me with because I did not know how to use it.

Today, however, He is sending me His Holy Spirit because He knows that I am following His Son.

This is the kind of spiritual pride all genuine religion fears most. It grows out of the feeling of the converted advertising man that he must sell what he has to every one else. If the Oxford Group Movement would only learn from the centuries of experience of the historic Christian Church to seed down these new converts and give them time to grow and season



MOSCOW IN WINTER

The Kremlin seen from the Moscow river. Photo by Intourist.

and mature before using them, they would save the Movement from repeating the mistakes of so many similar movements which have preceded it. But, then, Mr. Kitchen never would have written this book.

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## Shavian By-Products

*SHORT STORIES, SCRAPS AND SHAVINGS.* By Bernard Shaw. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by TEMPLE SCOTT

THIS latest collection of Shaviana may, perhaps, be more appropriately entitled "Shavings." It consists of a number of short stories and sketches, two scenes from "Back to Methuselah" which were omitted from the published form of that play, the story of the "Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God," and other "scraps and shavings" recovered from the periodicals in which they were first printed in the eighties and nineties of the last century. Collectors of Shaw's writings will welcome "Aerial Football" which appeared in a now forgotten magazine, *The Neolith*, in 1907, and "The Emperor and the Little Girl" which was written in 1916 for a Belgian War Charity for Children and which, we are told, had to be published furtively since it rebuked the war spirit of the time too pointedly. In the discarded scenes from the play the reader will recognize and enjoy an amusingly friendly and delightful caricature of Mr. G. K. Chesterton.

In addition to the set of John Farleigh's strikingly arresting drawings which appeared in the original edition of "The Adventures of the Black Girl," a set of new drawings by that artist are also included, completing the series made for this essay in criticism of missionary Christianity. Shaw is still of the opinion that it is wiser for the Black Girl to take Voltaire's advice and cultivate her garden. But what is she to do if she can't get a garden to cultivate? Is she to go to Russia for one? There, at any rate, as Shaw tells us, they have thrown the Old Testament into the wastepaper basket, so that the Black Girl can use her knobkerry to a more useful purpose than swatting missionaries and theologians on the head. She may rake her garden with it.

## Mirrors of Moscow

*WINTER IN RUSSIA.* By Malcolm Muggeridge. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

MR. MUGGERIDGE, correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in Soviet Russia, came back after eight months there bitterly disillusioned. That which disillusioned him wasn't the Revolution as such—an objective fact in history, the tremendous implications of which he feels it still too soon to attempt to evaluate—but the so-called Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the actual Soviet Government; and the whole complex of careerism, maudlin sentimentality, poisonous psychological "compensations" of one sort and other masking as idealistic

taking care to let fall a drop or two of his own corrosive acid into the test-tube to change its color completely. Some of his more guilelessly amusing thrusts are obtained by very accurate imitations of bits of cable correspondence, in various styles, he first having taken us, in turn, inside each correspondent's head and revealed the flimsy grounds on which each particular dispatch was based.

But, the reader may inquire, isn't this universal lambasting, a bit one-sided and unfair? Undoubtedly. Mr. Muggeridge knows his facts, nevertheless; there is such a thing as wholesome indignation, and there has been so much leaning over backward to be fair to Russia's present dictators, so much pussy-footing and "on-the-other-hand" stuff, let alone downright misrepresentation, that it is refreshing to come across an intelligent observer who is just plain disgusted all through and doesn't give a hoot who knows it.

## A Philosopher-King

(Continued from first page)

impossibility under a democracy. People don't elect representatives to "go against the crowd." Knowing that Andrew Mellon and Calvin Coolidge were busy with tax refunds at the very time when a "compensatory" State should have been using taxes to liquidate the public debt, Mr. Lippmann is aware that representatives of the people are fallible. Yet he hopes. But even if the Federal Reserve had raised the rediscount rate in 1928, thus preventing the boom from getting out of hand, trouble would have resulted, according to some competent authorities. For the raising of the rediscount rate would have made lending more profitable, with a consequent shifting of capital from abroad, say, to New York. And such a shift would have its consequences, perhaps, in a disastrous unsettling of foreign economies. "Compensation" at one point means an alteration of the equilibrium at another. It seems to me that crisis would be just as endemic under "compensation" as it was in 1928. Mr. Strachey has indicated why.

Mr. Lippmann, I think, mistakes a general clutching at straws for a permanent government principle. If the rate of profit is not doomed to shrink to zero (Mr. Strachey thinks it is), then the time for straw clutching will pass as prosperity returns. If it is doomed to shrink to zero, there won't be much left to "compensate." But of course "freedom" is not necessarily



WALTER LIPPMANN

devotion—the gigantic racket, as he sees it, which has gathered around it.

Toward the Revolution, as such, Mr. Muggeridge must be presumed to be sympathetic, else he would never have been correspondent for the *Guardian* and never have been sent to Moscow. The result is a book, at last, with something really new to say about Soviet Russia. For here we have neither dull reactionary complaining, nor the equally crass enthusiasm of the visitor determined to make all his dreams come true (two classes into which many books about Soviet Russia fall) but the revulsion of an intelligence, modern and favorably disposed, against the whole Show as it actually exists.

The result might be described very roughly as a sort of "Mirrors of Moscow," for "everybody" is here, from the clever, tight-rope-walking American journalist up and down; commissars, Foreign Office types, diplomats, correspondents, visitors of all sorts, occasionally mentioned by name, more often slightly masked, and the whole combined into chapters of acute, savagely ironical, and highly entertaining reporting thrown into fictional form.

A lot of it will go over the heads of those unacquainted with the scene, but it may be said that behind every one of the names in the book there is an actual individual, and while some of the characters may be composites, the better you know present-day Moscow, the more priceless, in their witty and devastating accuracy, do Mr. Muggeridge's pictures become. He is quite ruthless with his own countrymen, but no less with some of the Americans.

"My name," a grey-haired American said, "is Dr. Canning. You may know, or have heard of, my daughter, Beatrice Canning."

She was on the other side of the table; an immense woman, red-cheeked; a kind of passionate stupidity in her eyes, a monumental idiocy . . .

Miss Canning's book, "Sex and the Soviets," had made a great stir in the States. She had stood shoulder to shoulder with the toiling masses of Russia for no less than ten years in their struggle to create a classless, socialist society. Trotsky, it appeared, had once made advances to her in a taxi. He had, she often recounted, rested his historic hand on her knee; and she, perhaps mistakenly, had withdrawn the knee from his grasp.

One of the telling things about the narrative is that the author dodges none of the propaganda; keeps quoting it, in fact, literally and with all its eloquence, just

indissolubly bound up with the capitalist system, in spite of Mr. Lippmann's assumption. As Hitler and Thyssen have proved in Germany, capitalism can make use of a dictatorship. And theoretically, socialism can be democratic. It doesn't happen to be democratic in Russia, but that may be the fault of a country that had no capital plant to speak of when the Bolsheviks broke the Kronstadt rebellion (the Kronstadt sailors demanded "free election") and went in for a one-party dictatorship to control the New Economic Policy. I think Mr. Lippmann does socialism an injustice when he identifies it with absolutism. If one can vote for and recall one's "compensators," why can't one vote for and recall a board of "planners"? One would need a book to argue the question, which may be a tribute to Mr. Lippmann's powers of stimulation.



# The BOWLING GREEN

IN PRAISE OF BOSTON

I'VE never seen a Lowell walk,  
Nor heard a Cabot speak with God,  
But I enjoy good Boston talk  
And Boston beans and Boston cod.

And dear to me are Boston's ways,  
Her tea-shops and her candied sweets,  
Her old-world charm and quaint displays,  
Her gabled roofs and sloping streets.

Here Life moves on an ordered stage,  
Whereon the Past is still sublime,  
And spinsters of Victorian age  
Hold fort against the raids of time.

Here every stone shows Boston's pride  
In throwing off the British yoke,  
Yet Boston's English none may chide:  
She speaks it as it should be spoke.

For Boston is an English name,  
And, when Old England's star is set,  
New England tongues will chant her fame  
With "R"-less accents of regret.

But, most of all, I like the town  
Because it's so sedate and slow,  
Because no sky-scrapers frown down  
On speed-mad Troglodytes below.

But houses built three storeys high  
With English porch and winding stair,  
A gray mist in an English sky,  
A common and a cobbled square,

And fisherfolk in argosies,  
With snow-clad prow and frosted wings,  
Who brave the wintry deep—All these  
Are our and Boston's lasting things.

R. H. BRUCE LOCKHART.

ESOTERICA VINIANA

Clients who have been taking up the study of wine in a humble and experimental way tell us that their chief difficulty, especially when dining with connoisseurs, is ignorance of the professional patter. This is quite true; those who esteem themselves gourmets have a jargon all their own. It is embarrassing, when given a wine your host evidently believes something rather special, not to know what to say about it. The Wine Steward of the Three Hours for Lunch Club has prepared the following list of appropriate comments which can be memorized by those who are at a loss when some knowing comment is desirable:

Of a modest Bordeaux (claret) it is ingenious to say, *A real Frenchman's claret: it makes you feel chez vous. Or, an amusing little wine! Does it travel?*

Of a wine you don't care for: never be so crass as to say you don't like it. Purse up the lips, gargle it round a little, corrugate the brows, cockle your nose, wait for the others to express themselves, and then ask to be allowed to smell the cork. This is always a social triumph.

Be careful about using the words *body* and *bouquet*, which anyone can learn from advertisements or catalogues. More impressive are *tone*, *ether*, *esprit*; or technical terms borrowed from other sciences—e. g., *frequency*. Of a fine cognac it is very knowledgeable to say *a very high frequency*; or, inhaling the vapors, it *throws a notable ether*. After drinking, look solemn while you count twenty, tap your chest gently with one finger, and say *a good clear echo*.

Of a genteel Barsac, *a bit virginal*. In the case of Chablis you are lost among connoisseurs unless you remember to allude to the *gun-flint savor*. Of a big riotous Burgundy—a Chambertin of a superb year, for instance—you must be wary. Play safe, using some famous French dictum such as *it opens out in the mouth like a peacock's tail*.

It is well to keep a memorandum of the Big Years of Bordeaux and Côte d'Or written out on a card in the pocket of your dinner coat. This can be consulted in the lavatory.

A useful phrase in emergencies is to ask *Is it shottled?* the insider's slang for *chateau-bottled*.

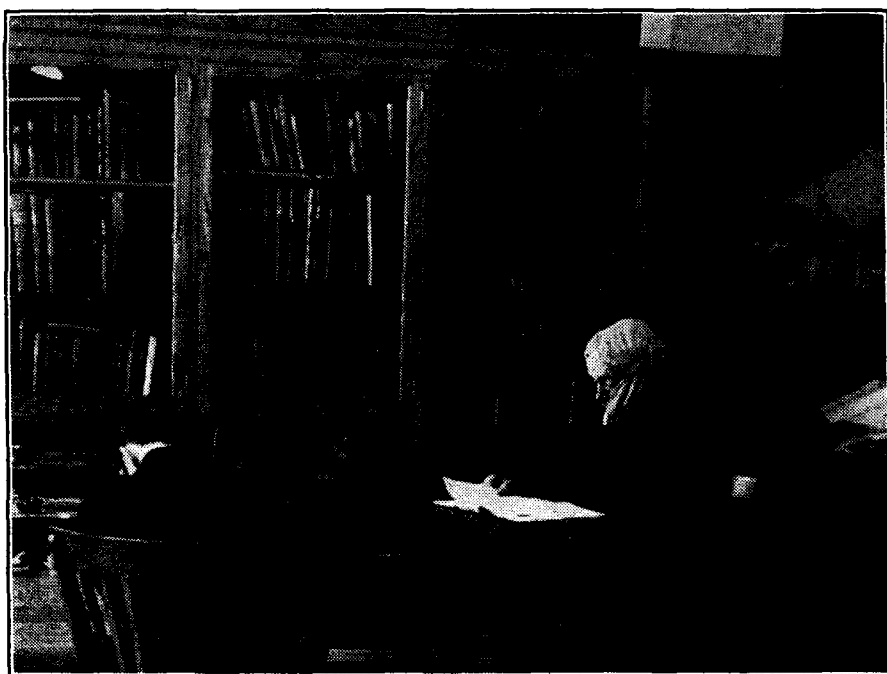
Of a medium vintage, which proves more palatable than you expected, say *seemed a trifle shy at first, but it has temperament*.

Never commit yourself prematurely. If asked for an opinion after the first few sips, say *It has nice ankles. I'll tell you more presently*. Or, *a little languid but I daresay it has something up its sleeve*.

Don't hesitate to call for a piece of Bel Paese or Pont l'Eveque or Port de Salut, because the real enthusiast always insists that a wine has been clandestinely married to one of these cheeses.

Occasional quotations from the works of Berry, André Simon, Warner Allen and Professor Saintsbury are of crushing effect. Imply that other writers on wine are arrivistes.

Miscellaneous standard comments: *delightfully feminine; a bit too luscious;*



VIEUX CURÉ: Photo by Robert Disraeli

*rather trivial, what?; a real Englishman's port; is this a good year for laying down?*

Never ask, of a cocktail, *Did this go round the Cape in a barrel?* And such remarks as *it tastes of the wood* are dangerous, they recall Prohibition days.

It is not necessary to have any technical dicta for champagne; no wine lover cares much for champagne.

A sure score is to insist that the waiter cut off the whole of the metal capsule on top of the bottle. The inexperienced waiter rarely does so.

## MEMORANDA

Discarding a memorandum book filled with our own private Concerns we find a lot of confidential notations, as follows: The full page advertisement in the New York Herald Tribune (May 26) about the Prince of Wales's trousers seemed to us in excessively poor taste. Mr. Roth, the "Physiognomical Barber" on 81 Street just West of Broadway is an old Navy man and hopes to do enough trimming for the fleet so that he can get back to his favorite Honolulu, where he ran a barber shop for four years. The name TWYEFFORT on a window at Fifth Avenue and 57th always encourages us to try try again. Admiring the beautiful wands of light waved by the battleships the night the fleet anchored in the Hudson made us regret that so many thrilling phenomena were first encouraged for warlike purposes. W. S. H. showed us a note written in 1913 by James Huneker (to Dr. T. C. Williams)—"had to return to Holland for the opening of the Peace Palace (a fine restaurant it will make some day)." John Hervey writes from Chicago that he is disappointed not to have heard more about Charles Lamb in this his centennial year; but the actual date of the anniversary does not come until December. There will be much said later on,

because few great writers have been so misconstrued as Lamb. Mr. Hervey suggests, justly, that we reread Lamb's letter to Dyer of Dec. 20, 1830, which has curiously shrewd bearing on present discontents.

Thayer Cummings showed us an office questionnaire in which the staff of Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn listed the books they had most enjoyed. Almost without exception it was older titles, not current, that had given most enduring pleasure. On a visit to Purdue University in Indiana we were much impressed by two great blocks of rough stone over the doorway of the Union building. These were intended to be carved into symbolic statuary by some famous sculptor, but apparently the money gave out. But it seemed to us they are much more impressive as they are, suggesting the unhewn material of the Future which we can carve as we will. Arguing with Buckminster Fuller about streamline principles of living it occurred to us that the New Testament is the most fundamental essay on Physics: to say *Do as you would be done by* implies the reduction of unnecessary friction and resistance; a streamline car illustrates the principle of

love by passing through the atmosphere with as little tearing as possible. The Ancient Mariner also was a streamliner, didn't he say something about "The air is cut away before and closes in behind"? All the great poets have been unconsciously great physicists. Most great ideas have what the advertisements call two-way stretch. Old John Mistletoe, who attempted years ago to popularize the word *callipygian* is amused to see it is now a registered trademark in the garment business.

The Walt Whitman Foundation held its annual picnic at Timber Creek (near Camden, N. J.) on Walt's birthday, May 31. Whitmanites were told to drive out White Horse Pike and turn off at Fairmount Avenue: "on one side are evergreen trees, on the other side a gas station." This sounds pleasantly symbolic and would have pleased Walt.

The tallyho about Dickens and his domestic affairs is happily subsiding. We are wondering now how soon some newspaper syndicate will exhume the famous (and far more exciting) correspondence between Thackeray and Mrs. Brookfield and ventilate it as something new. Somehow we got a sort of grin out of the solemn notice "The letters from Charles Dickens to Mrs. Dickens are copyrighted by NANA and the New York Times." Kindly old NANA.

For whether Dickens loved his wife  
Or whether their romance grew dim  
Means nothing in the reader's life  
Who likes him best for Tiny Tim,  
For Pickwick, and the Murdstones grim,  
The Cricket, Carol, and the Chimes  
And gladly leaves the worst of him  
To NANA—and the New York Times.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

## Introduction to Life

STRIPLINGS. By N. Warner Hooke. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS really extraordinary first novel is remarkable in two ways, as a deeply moving study of adolescence, and as a rather annoying attempt to be shocking. It deals with one of those amazingly hard families which are apparently to be found nowhere but in England: the ineffectual Mr. Tamlin, his Amazonian wife Georgina, her resident lover, tolerated by Mr. Tamlin because he contributes to the expense of the land-poor household, and the two children, Biff, Georgina's legitimate son, and Netta, her daughter by her lover, a Tamlin by courtesy and law alone. Of the older generation, the only one with any force of character is Georgina, and she exists for foxhunting. When the lover has had enough and withdraws, when everything has been sold that can be sold, when she is ostracized by the neighbors, she is quite indifferent, so long as she has a leaky roof and a good hunter. The children grow up under no control except necessity's, as the family tumbles downhill; we watch them grow from eight to fifteen, self-sufficient, and quite free from conventions.

The publishers seem to have some qualms about this aspect of the book, and in justification of their fears it may be said that the parts of the book dealing with previously tabooed bodily functions of all kinds are quite as frank as anything in "Ulysses," and the proportion of them is considerably higher. The publishers have deprecated criticism on the jacket, saying that if the book brings a blush to your cheek, they ask your forgiveness; but one may doubt if they really expected to be criticized. For the convention of candor has so completely replaced the convention of modesty that most people would rather do their blushing unseen than risk being accused of Victorianism. And indeed, so long as literary expression was strangled by censorship, there was only one side for anybody who cared for freedom. But now that the battle is won, it is worth while pointing out one or two ancient facts. The coprological may be uproariously funny; it may be profoundly tragic; it may be a necessary part of a realistic effect, and in these cases it needs no justification. But the coprological has one other quality: it is disgusting; and it is as fair a criticism to say that a book is in parts disgusting, without sufficient cause, as to say that it is dull. And this must be said of "Striplings." Passages in it are, speaking precisely, dirty; and dirtiness is unattractive in a companion, without raising any moral question. Nothing in the book brought a blush to the fairly well weathered cheek of this reviewer, but several pages brought his dinner into his throat—to be as specific as seems courteous, the pages describing the hardships of the dog.

And yet this is by all means a book to recommend to readers who will take their chances with a rough Channel crossing for the sake of what lies beyond. The author (one suspects "N. Warner Hooke" of being a woman) has written a sensitive, touching, very fine story. As the children get older, their characters are made to grow with those almost imperceptible touches that are the mark of the highest art. One gets acquainted with them as a couple of pleasant, sturdy little kids; one watches them mature, with an increasing affection for them one can hardly account for; one sympathizes with Netta in her childish adoration for her indifferent big brother. And then, in sheer fascination, one sees them sent to school, to meet the world after so slight a training, and sees adulthood make Netta more shallow and dreamy while it deepens Biff; and watches his all but tragic passion for his sister. And when at last Biff faces the fact that he must somehow come to terms with the consequences of his whole higgledy-piggledy bringing up, when he leaves his home and walks out into the fog, one is divided between admiration and anxiety. I know of no book that has left me with a more unbearable desire to know what happened next, and of few books that have left me with a more vivid impression of having made new friendships.