

## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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### Lecturing

The literature of lecturing is scant, remarkably scant in comparison with the vast library of secondary books that deal with belles lettres, its history, its nature, and its worth. And surely no one will be able to write the intellectual history of our times in America, or for that matter the pre-Civil War period here, or the mid-nineteenth century in Great Britain, or the Renaissance in Italy, without such a study of the public lecture as has not yet been attempted. We have chapters on Boccaccio's lectures on Dante, a few studies of the Lyceum lecture which spread from New England to the Middle West, many accounts of famous individual lecturers, as of the precise Emerson, of Arnold who could not usually be heard on the back benches, of famous *conférences* in France, of platform performers like Mark Twain and Dickens, but no documented history of what certainly has been one of the powerful social agencies, and particularly in the United States.

One reason for this lack is that scholars and historians have thought of lectures in the root sense of the word, as readings, and it has been assumed that the famous lectures have all been published, and that we possess and have estimated them as literature, or as education. But this is not true, either in the university lecture, or in the public lecture which is the form that, here in America, would be the most interesting to study and discuss. Even read lectures are seldom given (as has been proved in Emerson's case) in the form in which they are finally printed, while every lecture addict knows that the most effective lectures are those which never have been written down, and never will be. They are projectiles shaped for the immediate target, and even when the title remains the same in different deliveries, are as different as the audiences to whom they are addressed.

The public lecture, which has been such an important and such an unnoted factor in the intellectual life of America, is usually of this type. It has been our chief means of adult education. The British are scornful of the celerity with which thousands of Americans, women in particular, rush from lecture hall to lecture hall, although they are not unwilling to fill their pockets with the proceeds of what they call a vice, and to profit by the known weakness of lecture-goers for a "name." And yet the taunt can be turned the other way. Public lecturing of the kind that is

best described as adult education has never appealed to the erudite and the sophisticated anywhere. They prefer to read or talk, and only an exceptional performance will induce them to sit for an hour in a hot hall. Popular lecturing is for those on the upgrade intellectually and esthetically, men and women who are accumulating after a poverty-stricken youth, and who have not yet reached the point where they can live on their intellectual capital by turning it over themselves. And where public lecturing is highly successful only one inference can be drawn, which is that in spite of superficiality, intellectual snobbery, the desire to get cultured quickly, and the other diseases of lecture-going, the population that makes the lectures successful is alive intellectually, awake to education, desirous of a richer intellectual life. In both Great Britain and the United States the erudite and sophisticated do not much attend lectures. But what might be called the upper middle class of the intellectual world in Great Britain are content with their minds, uninterested in what lecturers can give them, static: in the United States they are pathetically clamorous for more knowledge, more power over culture, more vision. Any skillful British lecturer, and some very unskillful ones, can make a living in America, and no American lecturer, skillful or unskillful, can pay his expenses in Great Britain, but the reflection to be made is certainly not upon the American lecturer or upon America. Significantly, the best audiences for popular lectures in Great Britain are to be found among the laboring classes—who are not content with their intellectual equipment.

A public lecture of the spoken variety has a technique quite different from the essay or the essay read as a lecture. A good popular lecturer who speaks, not reads, will have only a few points to make, often only one, and the meat of his address could be packed in a half dozen matured and carefully worded paragraphs. But his argument is as flexible as his voice should be. His audience is his orchestra. He brings them into a rhythmic harmony and, knowing the piece he must play with them, interprets and adapts it to their mood and capacity. But this is much too rigid an analogy. A good lecturer will reach after comprehension and pursue it. He will repeat without being repetitive, expand without being diffuse, stretch an exposition until he has found the precise illustration which for that audience opens the crowd mind to conviction. And yet he is not arguing really; he is no stump speaker. His purpose is to find or make that degree of emotional warmth at which ideas can enter into brains in a temperature where they can live long enough to make their mark. This is why he traverses only a little space in logic or theory. The reader of an essay takes only what he can and often not what he ought; the audience of the lecturer can be made to take what in the brevity of a written paragraph might never reach it. A good public lecture is the successful development by variants of a single theme.

And if too many lecturers have never mastered this art, and too many audiences never appreciate it, that is in part because criticism has never dignified it with the importance its history deserves.

Although he is over eighty, Sir James Frazer, author of "The Golden Bough," is reported to be at work on a new book. He is at present in Paris, undergoing treatments by an eye specialist.



"I'VE JUST SOLD AN ARTICLE TO GOOD HOUSEKEEPING."

## To the Editor: *Emotional Appeal in Modern Fiction*

### Revitalizing Literature

SIR: Mrs. Wharton's analysis, in a recent *Saturday Review*, of the decay of literary vitality should be convincing to everyone except the optimists who still find greatness everywhere. But the situation may be a little worse than she thinks, for she neglected one of the important adjuncts of any art, the audience. It is as true of the consumers as of the creators of literature that "the rejection of the past has definitely impoverished the present," and it is a rare artist who finds it psychologically possible to work in a vacuum. The only people who can write with any conviction today are those who have something to say which is comprehensible to a fair number of readers.

Ira D. Sankey singing "The Ninety and Nine" produced an emotion in our parents which probably nobody singing anything could produce today; the receptive background is no longer there. Certainly the emotion which Sankey touched is gone, and others too; Mrs. Wharton herself is an instance. It has been contended that "The Age of Innocence" is the last great American love story because people do not feel that way any more. Possibly not many of them could feel that way in 1880, but at least the thing was regarded as conceivable. In 1920, when "The Age of Innocence" appeared, there were still many readers who remembered that it had once been conceivable; yet that book owed most of its success to its brilliance as an antiquarian reconstruction of manners, not of morals. Nothing of comparable emotional appeal has since been written, and the reason may be not only that we have not the writers but that we have not the readers who would know what the writers were talking about. McFee's "No Castle in Spain" is probably as good a contemporary love story as could be written. The old melodic line is there, the bodily and spiritual need of a man and a woman for each other; but the harmonies with which our ancestors would have orchestrated the melody are gone, and McFee has had to do as much as he could without them.

The diligent endeavors of a thousand circulating-library novelists have proved that promiscuity is no satisfactory substitute for the old-fashioned romantic love as literary material; with the consequence that serious contemporary writers more and more drop the love interest in the background. The question remains whether there are any emotions deeply enough and widely enough felt in the society of the present to make literature of any emotional appeal possible. In 1932 it began to look as if there was no emotion left in America but that ironic self-depreciation which was a concomitant, if not a cause, of the decay and downfall of the late Austrian Empire. Mr. Roosevelt, however, discerned some other emotions, appealed to them, and stimulated them—indignation, courage, and hope. If it turns out that his faith is justified by his works, he may have made in the long run an immense contribution to the revitalizing of American literature.

ELMER DAVIS.

New York City.

\* Our readers may recall Mrs. Wharton's sentence from which Mr. Davis quotes: "It begins to look as though the rejection of the past—accidental, enforced at first, but now, it must be supposed, deliberate—has definitely impoverished the present."

### Clues to Joyce's "Ulysses"

SIR: In your issue of February 10, there was an elegant two-page advertisement of the handsome Random House edition of "Ulysses," which was offered as "a simple clue" to that work. As one who has been vastly amused by Joyce's more solemn exegetists in their wilder efforts to elucidate the most obscure trivialities of Dublin life in 1904, I feel compelled to draw attention, before it is too late, to a couple of details which may one day be adopted by the aforesaid exegetists.

The picture numbered 1 is described as a "Round Tower . . . like the one where Stephen Dedalus and Buck Mulligan have breakfast." The picture does, it is true, show a round tower, one of the many such towers which are a peculiarity of early Irish ecclesiastical architecture. In fact, so far as the blurred picture reveals anything, this seems to be the round tower at Clondalkin, a village outside Dublin city, which possesses a very fine specimen. But the tower at Sandycove, where Dedalus and Buck Mulligan lived, was and is a Martello tower, a modern structure, dating from the early nineteenth century, and once used for coast defence. When abandoned as obsolete, these towers were frequently fitted up as summer residences by people who liked the novelty of the thing. The difference between the two structures is roughly that between Notre Dame and a Cherbourg lighthouse.

Picture number 4 is called "The Beach: Dublin Bay where Bloom goes to rest from his wanderings." Actually it is a picture of a once fashionable watering-place called Bray, in the adjoining County Wicklow, and does not play any part in Joyce's story. Dublin Bay is invisible from Bray, unless viewed from the top of Bray Head, the hill shown in the photograph.

Although correctly labelled "The Museum," picture 2 is a peculiar snapshot of a corner of the building, and shows neither the entrance opposite the Library—the main entrance, from which one would naturally proceed to the Library—nor the only other entrance to the building, in another block. It so happens the Library and Museum entrances are identical. Maybe this tricky shot is designed to puzzle the uninitiated.

ERNEST BOYD.

New York City.

### Old Burnsides

SIR: For years I have been waging a lonely and losing battle against the use of the strange, unmeaning word "sideburns" for a certain form of whisker. It is growing in frequency on the pages of our best writers—I believe it was in "Anthony Adverse" I last saw it. I heard it last evening on the lips of a lecturer. . . .

Now everyone who lived within hailing distance of the Civil War must know that General Burnside wore his whisker in a way which gave it his name. In the supplementary volume of the Century Dictionary "burnsides" is given as "a style of beard such as that affected by General Burnside." There is no mention of its corruption.

Do you think use is going to sanction the inversion? If not will you do what you can to scotch the absurdity?

A. L. T.

Germantown, Pa.

## The Saturday Review recommends

### This Group of Current Books:

THE ROBBER BARONS. By MATTHEW JOSEPHSON. Harcourt, Brace. Biographical studies of some of America's great industrialists.

A WARNING TO WANTONS. By MARY MITCHELL. Doubleday, Doran. The tale of a beautiful worldling who set a court by its ear.

I WENT TO PIT COLLEGE. By LAUREN GILFILLAN. Viking. A chronicle of the coal mines.

### This Less Recent Book:

THE RED HOUSE MYSTERY. By A. A. MILNE. Dutton. A really good detective yarn.



## The South in Pride and Degradation

RIDGEWAYS. By Frances Renard. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

IT is easy to romanticize over the South, and difficult to see it truly; and no wonder, for the South, like Greece in the time of the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, is a true Aristotelian protagonist of tragedy among nations. That the South made a life which, whatever its fatal flaws, was very lovely, and that after the Civil War the South was so beaten down as to give up the struggle to rise, finding excuse in circumstance for indulging herself in weakness, and adding, like the Euripidean Hecuba, the tragedy of the soul to the tragedy of circumstance—this story seems to call for rhetoric and exaggeration. And so we have had innumerable sabers-and-roses tales in which every gentleman's house seems to be the size of Blenheim Palace; or we have the stories of Mr. William Faulkner, whose characters, with their idiot sons, their incests, their uncontrollable passions, and fantastic conceptions of honor, are as plainly the decadent aristocrats of the extreme romantic tradition as are the inhabitants of "Udolpho" and its brood of crumbling castles on the Rhine or the Apennines. The writers who have avoided romanticism have too often been carried into the embittered naturalism of Mr. Thomas Wolfe, who will hardly call Lee brave or Monticello fair. But in "Ridgeways," a novel which touches five generations of the life of a Kentucky family, Miss Frances Renard has achieved the honor of showing, in her characters, the great days and the degradation of the South, and of showing them truly and clearly.

Ridgeways itself is the house of the Hardison family, who, under the system of slavery, are gentlemen farmers, representatives of what was perhaps the only class that could without affectation claim both parts of that phrase. Ridgeways is not presented as a palace, but it is a well-built, well-proportioned, neo-classic house, it is the scene of a good and gracious life, and it is the motive force of the book. When at the end of the Civil War Ben Hardison, who had gone off at fifteen to join the Confederates, comes back, painfully lame from a shrapnel wound and broken in health from a military prison, to find himself an orphan, the slaves gone, the place deserted, it is the look of Ridgeways, looted and wantonly defaced by the Northern army, that completes his despair. It is its stateliness which is still enough to attract Ellen, the daughter of some nomadic squatters, and to make possession of it become the reason of all the rest of her life.

Miss Renard keeps throughout her story her integrity of truthfulness. She sacrifices nothing to the neat shaping of a tragedy; nothing, either, to a conventional happy ending. The first chapters of her book show the life of the slave-holding South, without excess of admiration or blame; the life of Ben, who, we see so clearly, might have saved something of his fortunes if he could have plucked up an ounce more energy in his shot-shattered soul, shows the story of the post-war South, without excess of pity or blame. And the book to the end is equally sincere and sound.

Its faults, however, are undeniable. It has a strong tendency to break up into three or four successive stories; Miss Renard has not quite succeeded in carrying over the interest from Ben to Ellen, from Ellen to her daughter Noncie, from her in turn to her daughter, or to make their stories overlap sufficiently; and the presence of Ridgeways in the background is too remote to hold the book together as it should. Closely connected with this is the tendency to rely too much upon accident; again and again accident comes in, taking at least an important share in settling all the issues of the novel, and in doing so emphasizing its disunity.

Nevertheless, although the book has difficulty in moving as a whole, all the parts are fine, honest work; and even of the

movement of the whole we can say that it is wholly convincing in showing Ridgeways as the symbol of a life that was so beautiful, so satisfying to the instinct, that merely working toward it was enough for a whole life. That, when we read the book, we believe; and though we have gone much further than that life, we wonder if we have fared so much better that any of our symbols will be as strong.

## Never a Sissy

THIS MUCH IS MINE. By Nola Henderson. New York: Harrison Smith & Robert Haas. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM

IN a brisk, conversational, and ground-covering style Nola Henderson presents the Turner family and the Turner Oklahoma farm. The farm and family resemble very little any others of recent fiction. The people are fully alive and far from bowed down by labor, the tempo of the farm is as quick and unpredictable as that of the city. Birth and death, sowing and reaping have taken on an imperative staccato quality under the press of time. There are slow moving characters in the book, but they are put to it to keep out of the way of the two central figures, the Turner women, mother and daughter, whose tremendous energies and thirst for accomplishment set the pace for all concerned.

Jo Turner, the heroine, is six when the book opens. She thinks and talks with an adult quickness. Her vocabulary taken over mainly from her mother leaves little to be desired as to color and expletive. She knows her own mind to a degree and



DRAWING BY RICHARD FLOETHE  
From the jacket of "This Much Is Mine"

prefers running away when she is bored with farm life, even with the inevitable whipping, to staying at home when the wandering mood is upon her. With her horned toads always willing to assume any role she assigns them, even those of Ma and Pa Turner, she has no need or desire for the insipidity of dolls. Life crackles in the vicinity of Jo. Something has to happen all the time. Little girls and fiction both have come a long way since another Jo was considered a tomboy.

The Oklahoma farm which Ma Turner inherited from her father, an inheritance that Pa Turner is never for long allowed to forget, forms the very present background of the story, but it knows its place and keeps to it; the foreground is needed for the noisy and constant clash of embattled personalities. To run the Turner farm beyond its present fences, to increase the farm stock in quantity and quality, these become the happy burden of Jo's life. With Ma wedded to old ways and Jo embracing new, the battle rages. Victory goes to the young. In love, however, Jo is predestined to disaster; it is too much of a side issue to receive more than her casual attention.

With the Turners and their farm Nola Henderson has a sure touch; these people are undeniable in their vitality; but when outsiders come on the scene—obviously for contrast—the spell is broken. The little city girl, the teacher, the uncle and aunt are lay figures. "Nice people" are not necessarily as bad as this. But one must admit that it would be difficult for any outsider to take on reality in the presence of the overwhelming and engrossing Turners.

As for Jo herself, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn could never have called her a sissy.

## Life in a Convent

FROST IN MAY. By Antonia White. New York: The Viking Press. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by SARAH N. CLEGHORN

AT first there seems nothing more remarkable about this story of children in a convent school of the more puritanic type than its limpid beauty and austere charm. These nuns who take into their thin, calm, remorseless hands the moulding of the hearts of little girls are limned with delicacy and reticence. The fairylike perfection of their routine enchants the rough-and-tumble Protestant reader, and so does their magic success in making modern children prize so dearly pleasures of such extreme simplicity. And the high erected drama of the Catholic year, encrusted with its incessant memorials, appears with real splendor in this small, delicate, and quiet book.

But into the reader's enjoyment, from time to time, a child comes crying, and awakens him with a start. Not circumstances have inflicted this sorrow, but the calm fingers of the nuns themselves, with conscientious care. It is Monica, sent away into disgrace for caricaturing the nuns on the margins of her lesson books; it is Léonie, proud and boyish, who has been removed from the Dante play they are preparing for the visiting Cardinal, because she enjoyed so much doing her part so well; or it is Nanda, the convert's daughter, who is carefully, gently, effectively humiliated, "that the broken will may be reset by God."

When these children appear thus, weeping, the picture of the convent darkens round the reader, and he feels a little ashamed of his previous admiration. He wonders whether these Mothers of the Five Wounds are not really Roman Vestals of the noblest type rather than practitioners of the bold, uncalculating gentleness of the gospels of Matthew and Mark.

But he comes in the end to think it is possible that this story may have been slightly acidulated by the sensitive spirit that relates it. For the closing calamity is not quite credible. Apt as grown-up persons are to be so unduly ashamed before each other when a good child's peccadilloes are suddenly discovered, that they retaliate with absurdly heavy reproaches upon the child, one cannot believe any father would cut the figure in real life that this father cuts upon the page.

It is after this book has been for some time laid aside that two extraordinary facts dawn upon the memory. These full-sized, dignified chief characters, whose fortunes have been so absorbedly followed, are children of fourteen years and under! And these children, receiving a religious education, have never once been reminded of the underdog, nor encouraged to throw indignant arms around him.

## A Crowded Tapestry

(Continued from first page)

of fascinating facts about the troubadours and jongleurs, for instance; reveals an assiduity in research as marked as Hervey Allen's. But don't think of him as an antiquary. He can give you action—swift action—when you want it. Note this:

Steel flashed; the litter's forward bearer twisted sideways, dropped the pole, and fell across it. The litter crashed to the ground at that corner. At the same instant a group of beggars flung themselves savagely upon its occupants. But Peire Vidal at the same moment had an inkling as to the nature of the attack. He was unarmed, but he leaped from the litter and struck out with all his might at the grimy bodies and ferocious faces. They drew back, so unexpected was his lunging defence, and he was

given a brief space of time to meet them as they closed in again. The shaft of the litter, crashing to the cobbles, had split. He reached down, broke it off close to the frame, and with this sharp stave lunged at the crowd. He smashed hands holding daggers, clouted a pair of ruffians over the head, turned the point into the cheek of a third with bloody effect, and shortly cleared the horde from about the wrecked vehicle.

Note this also about that random paragraph: Hewlett could not possibly have used "at the same instant" in one sentence, and then have followed it by "at the same moment" in the next. I cannot say that Mr. Cronyn has a style.

The narrative moves. There is bloody adventure, there are fine affairs in the Court of Love, there is ripeness and richness to the text. After all, you sail with Richard the Lion on a crusade.

As to crusades, there is the fine chant Peire Vidal made. It said, among other things, "now if our spirits are faint in this war to banish war—" and yet: "It was a chant for the crusade; not for this halting, mistaken, miserable expedition in pursuit of dowries and tribute." That has a modern ring!

There are beautiful and moving passages, as where Vidal spies upon Adélasie des Baux naked with her babe, and Barrale her husband enters her room and cruelly strikes her.

There is poetry and drama in the book in abundance. But both because of its length, and because it is a close-woven tapestry with multitudinous detail, it is not a book to save for a week-end. It will take you longer than that to finish it. It is the kind of book to sip leisurely like a wine with a fine bouquet. So far as I can tell, Mr. Cronyn has written with accuracy in regard to the events of the time and the details of life within it. He has written also with imaginative color and zest. Peire Vidal, the great troubadour, lives for us again as a thoroughly human character.

## A Mirror for Snobs

SUMMER'S PLAY. By G. B. Stern. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1934. \$2.50.

TURN the usual Joe Lincoln story upside down, and you get the plot of this novel: the intrusion by *hoi polloi*, in the form of summer vacationers, upon the peace, quiet, and privacy of the landed gentry and established residents of Clifford's Bay, and the unfortunate effects on both sides. Beginning in a light-spirited vein of fantasy, Miss Stern amusingly characterizes both the vulgarity of the visitors and the snobbery of the home team—the snobbery being carried to the point of pathology by the Leigh family, who scrupulously keep their children from any contact with the intruders. The author is very good with the children: she shows how their peculiar combination of literalness and imagination converts their elder's prejudices into an elaborate fantasy; in their minds the Augs (short for August visitors) become a race apart from human beings.

The situation works itself up in a manner reminiscent of "The Innocent Voyage;" but the resolution is not up to the development. The first half of the book has many delicious moments; particularly the psychological explanation of such habits of Augs as leaving banana skins on beaches. But from acidulous and amusing irony, the story turns to violent action; and since the characters, presented satirically, have not been individualized, this comes out as melodrama. The end is straight Joe Lincoln, which is an anticlimax. One wishes that Miss Stern had allowed her penetrating frivolity to find its logical conclusion.



FROM THE JACKET DESIGN OF "THE FOOL OF VENUS."