

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

TEN CENTS A COPY



VOLUME XI

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1934

NUMBER 7

The Two Catherines

FULL FLAVOUR. By Doris Leslie. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY WENT

I WONDER how many novelists and budding novelists are working at the British Museum today, reading in old files of the newspapers, poring over long-forgotten advertisements, leafing the memoirs of past generations, studying the fashions of bygone days—all in order that they may reproduce faithfully, meticulously, in a coming masterpiece, the styles, the sentiments, the *ipsissima verba* of their ancestors unto the third and fourth generation.

This speculation is called forth by the recent perusal of some half-dozen family novels from the pens of English authors, and in particular by a reading of Miss Leslie's volume. I make the speculation in no spirit of depreciation, for the astonishing thing is that almost all of these novels command respectful consideration. I do not remember to have read a really bad one, and I have read some, including Miss Leslie's, that seem to me to be exceedingly good.

But why this uncontrolled multiplication of the brood of Galsworthy? Is it merely that the "Forsyte Saga" and "Cavalcade" have set a fashion, or is that only part of the explanation? Do these writers of today see change whirling at such speed down the ringing grooves of time that they feel they must pin the past down before it has slipped for ever beyond their reach? Is the present scene changing so rapidly that they dare not take the time to write about it? Or is it simply that English men and women, having seen a mansion that appeared so secure come crashing about their ears, turn nostalgically to the days when it was still standing and seemed as if it would stand for ever?

Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that nothing short of a saga satisfies the English novelist of today. Miss Leslie goes back to 1848, when the descendants of a French emigré were in possession of a prosperous cigar business called Hanson's, and ends in 1914, when the century-old building of Hanson's had just been demolished to make room for a mammoth hotel, and a crowd was gathered outside Buckingham Palace to cheer King George as the time limit of the ultimatum to Germany expired. I will hazard a guess that Miss Leslie is even now engaged on another volume that will bring the fourth generation of her Ducrox family through the war and up to date.

Even though Miss Leslie is travelling over familiar territory, she has beaten a new path through it, or if not an entirely new path, one that was only partially explored by G. B. Stern in her "Matriarch" trilogy. For Miss Leslie, in the present volume, deals almost entirely with the women of her chosen family—the males are mere foils to the females of the species; it is only when she comes to the fourth generation that a man, young Christopher, enjoys the spotlight, and even then his grandmother, Catherine, "steals the show" whenever she appears on the stage—much as did Ellen Terry in that rash production when she was invited to play the nurse to Miss Doris Keane's Juliet.

When lazy, good-natured Edward Ducrox died unexpectedly, he left an inconsolate widow, two young daughters, and a family cigar business that was pretty well on its last legs. Catherine, the elder daughter, who was eighteen, had already scanned

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The "immortal dinner" at Haydon's studio at which Keats joined Wordsworth, Lamb, and Landseer among others. Reproduced from "Autobiography of John Keats" (Stanford University Press).

A Poet Steadfast As His Star

BY LEONARD BACON

JOHN KEATS, in the eyes of many and most excellent judges, second in gifts only to the greatest of all poets, was born on October 31 (probably), 1795, in Finsbury, then a suburb, now part of the heart of London. Much has been written about his origins and his family which may be profitably ignored. It is enough to say that he was the son of the employee of a livery stable proprietor who had the good fortune to marry his employer's daughter and ultimately to succeed to the business, together with a comfortable though by no means gigantic fortune. At the end of his schooling in 1809, Keats was, at the instance of his guardian, apprenticed to a surgeon, with whom he served for three years till, after a probation not unproductive of imperfect sympathies, he separated from him in 1812. However, he continued his medical and surgical studies in London to such purpose that he ultimately received the license to practise, though by this time the interest in poetry, which it seems was in him rather late in development, had begun to be an overwhelming obsession. From 1815 onward he was a dedicated poet. He had, we know, written verse as early as three years before, but after 1815 hardly a line came from his pen which has not a burning or a poignant interest.

Even today it is with something like physical pain that we read the lines from "Sleep and Poetry":

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy—

that is to say if we realize that that year was the first of the five allowed him by the fates.

In 1817 Keats's first volume of poetry was published and fell dead. But undiscouraged he began the composition of "Endymion," strangest and most misunderstood of poems, which only in our time after the lapse of a philistine century is beginning to be properly comprehended and admired. Into the year 1818 the unfortunate boy managed to crowd enough strangely varied experience to last most people a lifetime. What with family illnesses and death, the departure of his brother George for America, and the attacks on "Endymion," which was published in April, it was a terrible year for him.

Nevertheless in the face of varied anxiety and depression he had finished "Isabella" in the Spring, begun the great "Hyperion" as the autumn ended, and by February, 1819 had composed the "Eve of St. Agnes," one of the greatest of English love-poems.

Never in so brief time was such huge creativeness. The year begun with the "Eve of Saint Agnes," saw the conception and completion of the "Ode to Psyche," "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," "The Ode to a Nightingale," "The Ode to Autumn," and the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," every one of them a great peak of poetry. As if that were not enough we have also "The Eve of St. Mark," which unhappily was never finished, and the five act drama "Otho the Great" which unhappily was. At all times during this creative year he was struggling with money difficulties, and his health was declining, becoming definitely alarming in December.

Keats died after great suffering on the 23rd of February, 1821, in the yellow house at the foot of the Spanish Stairs in Rome, and was buried by the Pyramid of Cestius, a relic of Roman funeral pomp which now serves as the monument of two English poets.

I propose here to make a brief appraisal, uncontaminated by detailed research, of some aspects of this strange, young, great poet, whose work grows stronger and more beautiful as time lengthens. In doing so I shall consider first of all his limitations which are trifling and nugatory, before touching on virtues which defeat estimation. It seems to me proper to say at once that Keats was not highly cultivated in the sense that Wordsworth and Shelley were cultivated, and that his extraordinary congenital power to discriminate values literary and psychological was not always sufficient to save him from outrageous lapses into bathos and bad taste. It is true that he had managed to read deeply among the Elizabethans. But he had only a schoolboy's Latin and just enough French to translate a poem by Ronsard or to become jealous when Fanny Brawne conversed in that tongue. Of Italian he possessed a mere smattering. And we should perhaps thank God that he knew no Greek, for we should never have had "On First Looking Into Chapman's

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Thar's Still Gold in Them Thar Hills

THE COMING AMERICAN BOOM. By L. L. B. Angas. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1934. \$1.50.

Reviewed by JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

INFLATION in America, says Major Angas, who has a fairly enviable record as a prophet, has just begun. And because the Roosevelt administration is bound, as he sees it, to keep on pouring more and more money into emergency expenditure, creating thereby a "redundancy" of cash in the pockets and the pass-books of the people, and enlarging the basis for credit as the government borrows at the banks, there should be, must be, a boom in common stocks.

"At a guess," says Major Angas, "I should say such a rise will begin before the end of the Summer of 1934." By projecting his graphs into the future, on a basis of plotting the coming behavior of short and long term market swings from what has happened in recent cyclical phenomena, Major Angas, who believes that history repeats itself on the Stock Exchange, concludes that common stocks may reach their 1929 levels around 1938. He is not yet "in person" forecasting such a rise, but he notes, apparently with satisfaction, that the credit facilities made available by devaluation of the dollar, the silver purchase plan, and other inflationary measures, exist to support it.

Most persons who saw their margins melt away in 1929 will, upon reading such a statement, cry "God help us" and rush to buy subsistence farms. For if the Dow Jones share index (Major Angas's economic bible) rises to 1929 heights once more, it will most certainly fall again to 1931 depths. Major Angas, who thinks that Roosevelt will "stabilize" after reflation, loses a little of his broker's hard-headedness when he mentions the word "stabilization." As the phrase goes, he hasn't thought this stabilization matter through. Assuming that a stable price level might be achieved, it would most certainly lead to a new variety of social harm, as I think

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