

The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.....Editor
NOBLE A. CATHCART.....Publisher
AMY LOVEMAN.....Associate Editor
GEORGE STEVENS.....Managing Editor
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT } Contributing
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY } Editors

Published weekly by The Saturday Review Co., Inc., 25 W. 45th St., New York, N. Y.
Noble A. Cathcart, President and Treasurer;
Henry Seidel Canby, Vice-President and Chairman; Amy Loveman, Secretary.

Subscription rates per year, postpaid in the U. S. and Pan-American Postal Union, \$3.50; in Canada, \$5; in Great Britain, 18 shillings; elsewhere \$4.50. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 1, 1879. Vol. 11. No. 11.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW is indexed in the "Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature."

THE SATURDAY REVIEW cannot assume responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts submitted without an addressed envelope and the necessary postage.

Copyright, 1934, Saturday Review Co., Inc.

Specifications for a Conservative Literature

Suppose the great split comes at last between conservative and radical in the United States, dividing families, uniting factions, crystallizing theories into two generalized and contrasting political principles. The cleavage will run through literature, of course, through belles lettres as sharply as through the literature of economics and politics and sociology, perhaps, indeed, leaving keener edges behind.

What the radical literature will be we can guess from the present,—there are already plenty of books that pretend to speak for a radical future. The great change would come, should come, in conservative literature.

The curious lack of an effective conservative literature in the depression period has been spoken of more than once in these columns. The reason, we feel sure, is that the true conservatives have themselves been changing. A conservative is not by necessity a reactionary, or a slave to vested interests. He does not always, or even often, speak for age against youth. The most brilliant conservatives in literary history have been young, sometimes very young. A conservative, by definition, wishes to preserve or restore values that he thinks are being sacrificed or destroyed. And he is right or wrong according to the nature of the values he fights for, and successful or unsuccessful according to the possibility or impossibility of saving them in a civilization whose law of success must always be change.

If, then, there is to be a conservative literature in this country as vigorous and as influential as the radicalism of the books of this decade, there must be more to its writing than doing it beautifully. There must be a desire to save, as obstinate as the radical will to reconstruct or destroy, and more discriminating. So far recent American conservative writing that deserves the name of art has been distinguished only by a sense of form and style as opposed to journalistic slovenliness, and by a grip upon ideals and character in contrast to an attack upon all stabilities. Robert Frost, Stephen Benét, Thornton Wilder, Robert Nathan, Elinor Wylie, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Willa Cather, E. A. Robinson, have been conservative only in their art, which in itself was in many instances at the beginning a radical innovation.

The conservatives, if the great split comes, will be partisans in more than an

esthetics; they will speak, like the Marxists, only let us hope less rigidly and frigidly, for a philosophy. They will have values in living to fight for, and professional quarrels over techniques of verse, types of diction, and methods of storytelling, which have stirred up most of the radical-conservative rows in recent literary criticism, will be forgotten in a struggle in which either side will use any well-forged weapon of expression that comes handy. We shall get then a literature of conservatism, which is something quite different from a literature that in form and taste is conservative.

Speed the day, for whatever the political complexion of the critical reader in this day of increasing controversy, he must be longing for fighting books well written on the conservative side that will shame the radicals into a literature that has more art in its propaganda.

The truth is that up to now the good writers have been out of sympathy with the conservative party in the United States. That party—it is of course not a political party but a fellowship of the like-minded, calling themselves sometimes Democrats and sometimes Republicans—has been reactionary, selfish, blind to the necessity of economic change, and sold to vested interests to be conserved at any cost to the public. No literature comes from this kind of conservatism; it is not indeed true conservatism but just the old piggishness of human nature with Mammon as its boss. A poet, a novelist, a critic, a dramatist, once he breaks away from the do-it-to-order of party journalism or the commercial manufacture of tripe for the columns next to advertising, finds no foothold in such a social philosophy. Literature, conservative or radical, is its poison, for a society concerned only with holding on to what it has grabbed has no use or time for literature. It would be slander to charge the conservatives at large of the United States with this gross and short-sighted materialism, yet they have certainly allowed such interests to represent conservatism. The trouble with conservative literature has been that one had to be a liberal in order to write it! When and if the new alignment comes, and when and if some principle more patriotic, more far-sighted, and more serviceable to an American civilization than a policy of holder-keeps-all, becomes a political philosophy for conservatives, there will be plenty of able pens available, and many a typewriter will be carried across the trenches into what was the enemy's camp.

According to a Viennese report Count Leopold Berchtold, the former Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, is about to issue his memoirs.

The work will be in five volumes. It will consist of two parts, one dealing with the social aspect of courts and diplomacy and the other with politics. Count Berchtold is reported to have included a detailed narrative of the time he spent at the St. Petersburg court, dealing fully with "those fateful days in 1914, when the aged Emperor Franz Joseph signed the declaration of war on Serbia."

The memoirs are described as "sensational in every line." Thus, for instance, says the report, "Count Berchtold felt convinced of the truth of the news concerning the Serbs' attacks on Temesku-bin, which duped the old Emperor, it being wrongly alleged that his Foreign Minister had forged the telegram." The memoirs are to be published in English and German.



"THIS BOOK OUGHT TO BE GOOD. THE AUTHOR IS RELATED TO THE BOSTON CABOTS."

To the Editor: *Rising in Defense of "Now in November"*

"Clairvoyant Insight"

SIR:—This is to enter a rebuttal to Alva C. Bessie's review of Josephine Johnson's "Now in November" printed in your issue of September 15th—or, rather, it is to express surprise at your reviewer's failure to see any value in the book beyond the dramatic denouement. To me the denouement, logically prepared though it was, seemed far less remarkable than the way in which the author illuminated the casual happenings, the almost eventless events, that preceded it. The very passages which, according to Mr. Bessie, fail "to build up and hold the interest" are, to my mind, the most thrilling in the book. Underneath their quiet, their very inconsequentiality, there is a conviction—a strength without sensationalism—which I have not seen in any novel of the last few years. The section devoted to the drought, with the interlude describing the false promise of the wind-storm, is a masterpiece of simple but exciting prose. Mr. Bessie says nothing of the way in which the author continually accomplishes the sense of poetry without resorting to obvious poetries and the sense of vitality without the tricks of "realism."

But, above all, "Now in November" is extraordinary because of its almost clairvoyant insight, its ripe understanding of things, places, and people, its unaffected sensitivity to the minutiae as well as to the major issues of life. It is astonishing that a girl in her early twenties should have composed a work which has, whatever else it has or lacks, such unpretentious but unmistakable power. It has—and how many books of this generation even suggest it?—wisdom. If ever a first book deserved salvos rather than condescension it is "Now in November."

LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

Elizabethtown, N. Y.

"Exquisite Balance"

SIR:—It is unfortunate that Miss Josephine Johnson's "Now in November" should have just the review it did have in your columns. Far from deserving the faintly condescending approval Mr. Bessie bestows on it, the book is, in my judgment, one which any novelist in America would be honored to have listed as his—whether as his first novel or his twentieth. Such an exquisite balance between exterior catastrophe and interior desperation has seldom been achieved anywhere. The "attenuated writing" of which Mr. Bessie complains is, in fact, the purest possible style; splendidly accommodated to the emotions for which it is a vehicle, beautiful in itself. It gives the reader that pleasure in the medium itself which is the highest virtue prose can strive for. And the "dead-level of the previous narrative" simply does not exist. I call Mr. Bessie's attention, and that of your readers, to such "previous" passages as the one in which Kerrin throws the knife and the one in which a rainstorm gathers but does not break. If any living American novelist besides Miss Johnson can achieve such sheer power so simply and economically, I have not had the pleasure of reading his books. If "Now in November" is a fragment, just what is a novel?

BERNARD DE VOTO.

Lincoln, Mass.

Mellowing Mr. Nock

SIR:—The very moment Albert Jay Nock's "A Journey into Rabelais's France" was published I rushed to a bookstore to buy it. As an abdominal surgeon myself I have always been interested in Rabelais, Chinon—and (appropriately) Jean du Bellay.—Bert Nock, whose work I have followed for going on thirty years, has at last done his better self justice. Long time he was too superior and finical. But Bert has graduated from the school of Hard Nocks and grown mellow again, as he was twenty-five years ago when, as Jack Reed used to tell me, he would sit on the desk in the *American Magazine* office and read Rabelais to the pretty office girls; mellow as he was when he would sit of an evening with a friend and guffaw over Artemus Ward or Mr. Dooley. Those days are pretty far back; and there has been a good deal of pedantry and opinionated condescension since. But now Bert is himself again.

Probably he got so thoroughly into the spirit of the old Frenchman, and so full of his gentillesse, that he just couldn't be cross any more. For whatever reason, he has written a gorgeous book. Get at it!

CHIRURGEON.

New York City.

Rabbits

SIR:—The poem in the latest *Review*, "Song of the Rabbits Outside the Tavern," by Elizabeth Coatsworth, is too utterly charming, original, and even touching, for words. One night when I was about 16 years old (which makes it 40 years ago) I shot a rabbit, in the moonlight, at the edge of the woods; and the sense of what she got into this poem flooded over me, and I never shot anything again. (Not even a man.)

DON MARQUIS.

New York City.

John Jay Chapman

SIR:—May I say through your columns that, for the purposes of a biographical study of the late John Jay Chapman which I have been privileged to undertake, I should welcome the opportunity to see any letters from him or any other material of possible bearing on such a book? Originals will be returned after the copying of serviceable passages.

M. A. DEWOLFE HOWE.

c/o The Boston Athenaeum,
10½ Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

A Bowker Bibliography

SIR:—As a part of the autobiographical volume entitled "Yesteryears," by the late Richard Rogers Bowker, it is desired to include a somewhat complete bibliography. During Mr. Bowker's long life of activity in literary, industrial, economic, and political affairs, he contributed widely to magazines and newspapers, in addition to the books which he wrote or edited, or in which he collaborated. It is requested that those who have such material will send specific information regarding it, or the material itself, to The Editors of *The Publishers' Weekly*. Things thus loaned will be preserved and returned.

THE EDITORS OF *The Publishers' Weekly*,
62 West 45 St.,
New York City.

The Saturday Review recommends

This Group of Current Books:

TO THE NORTH! By JEANNETTE MIRSKY. Viking. A history of Arctic exploration.

A JOURNEY INTO RABELAIS'S FRANCE. By ALBERT JAY NOCK. Morrow. Follows the trail of Rabelais, with comment by the way.

LUST FOR LIFE. By IRVING STONE. Longmans, Green. A fictionalized biography of Vincent Van Gogh.

This Less Recent Book:

CZARDAS. By JENO HELTAL. Houghton Mifflin. A story of Budapest.

Great Doings in Mongolia

TENTS IN MONGOLIA. By Henning Haslund. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1934. \$5.

Reviewed by OWEN LATTIMORE

IN 1926, my wife and I were in Kueihua, on the Mongolian frontier, waiting on the fortunes of a Chinese civil war; and there we stayed for six months. For part of the time a young Dane named Haslund, who had come from another part of the civil war area, was there with us. In a time of uncertainty and strain, pervaded by a sense of peculiarly uncomfortable and unheroic danger always round the corner, he was a comforting man to have near. His good spirits, his polar-bear appearance of immense strength, his wild but entirely convincing stories of journeys through wild country, his haunting Mongol songs and booming intonation of Lama prayers, all encouraged us to think of freedom beyond the grim, enclosing hills of the frontier.

When at last I slipped out through those hills, got to where the camels were hidden, and started on my first journey in Mongolia, Haslund saw my wife through the exciting days of the end of that particular civil war, with its mutinies and outbreaks of terror, and got her as far back as Kalgan on the return to what we hopefully call civilization. A year later he joined Sven Hedin's expedition and thus got back to his beloved Mongolia. He made his mark with Hedin as a master handler of camel transport, and when we next saw him, several years later, when he had just come back through Siberia and we were just beginning a year in Manchuria, he had a whole new stock of yarns of great days and great doings, among the Torgots of the Heavenly Mountains, in the Taklamakan Desert, and in getting his camels across the Kunlun to the Tibetan plateau.

The next thing in the saga of Haslund's life was an attempt to trade by caravan between Kashmir and Yarkand, over the Five High Passes whose names are like a challenge—Khardong, Sassir, Karakoram, Suget, and Sanju; a thing no European had ventured since the days of Dalglish, in whose memory there stands a cairn at the place where an Afghan murdered him on the God-forsaken Karakoram, 18,000 feet above sea-level.

And next? The next thing was that Haslund got caught by an avalanche. A Dane who was with him was killed, and the trading caravan was done for. Haslund, with a hip smashed, was at last carried back to the Kashmir side, after appalling agony and privation long drawn out. It was the broken hip that finally sent him home—not to Denmark but to Sweden, where he married the girl for whom he had wanted to make a fortune.

To that avalanche we owe the best book of travel and adventure in Mongolia since Gilmour of the Mongols died; for Haslund, though he can write on occasion as if the saga-makers of old had risen from their graves to endow him, would far rather tell a story than write one, and rather take the road than do either.

From all this it should be clear that Haslund is not a one-book man. "Tents in

Mongolia" is the beginning of what promises to be a remarkable series. But what a beginning! It is the story of an attempt by six Danes to found a settlement on the Sable Plateau, up in a corner between Outer Mongolia, Urianghai and Siberia. They broke the soil with ploughs, traded for furs, and herded cattle on the open open range. They learned Mongol, and worked with the Mongols to improve the economy of their nomadic life. But their most startling journeys they undertook by themselves, without depending on the Mongols even to handle their transport.

Perhaps the greatest value of the book is that Haslund is never "superior" to the Mongols, and yet never sentimentalizes them. His own spirit answers to their boldness and self-reliance. There can never be such another superb description of the old Outer Mongolia before the Red Revolution, for those days are over. Haslund's own description of getting into and out of a Bolshevik prison is amusing; but it is not the important part of the book. He was too close to the older Mongolia to feel the sweep of the revolution, which has its own romance and appeal to the younger Mongols.

He is to be read rather for his stout handling of snow-covered mountains, blizzards, carts breaking through the ice of rivers, and headlong rides and fragments of old legendary tales. Above all, he gives the feeling of a land in which, for a thousand miles from north to south and a couple of thousand miles from east to west, there is not a mile of metalled road nor a strand of barbed wire. And the whole of the land, blue plateau and hollow desert, dark forest and bright grassland, echoes with the legends and ballads and memories of a great people now fallen from power, but still proud in the saddle and gracious in their tents.

Owen Lattimore is a newspaper correspondent and explorer. He is the author of "High Tartary" and "Manchuria, Cradle of Conflict."

North of the Circle

(Continued from first page)

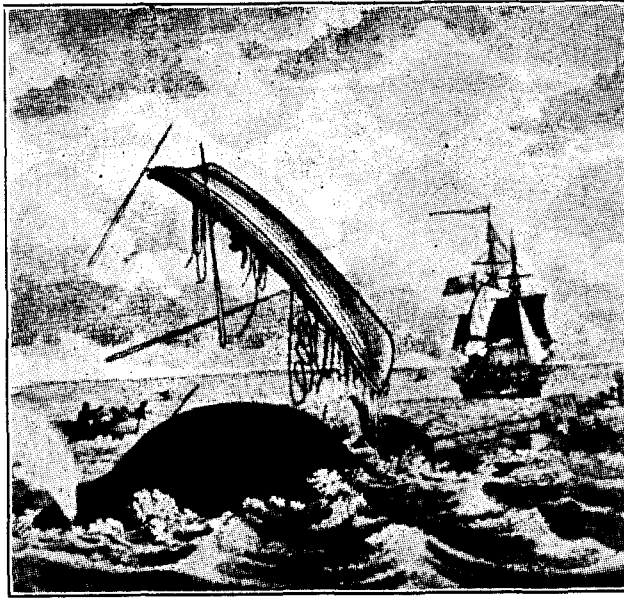
man in the variety of methods it uses to repel the explorers who would invade the secret places it guards. Sometimes it is like a wary general who stages a shameful retreat in order to ambush the intruder; or it is like an enchantress, a grim, golden Circe, whose song ensnares.

The "victorious defeat" of the struggle to explore the North has lasted, says Miss Mirsky, for twenty-two centuries. That struggle she traces from the earliest explorers to the present day. In her pages the sympathetic reader senses the urge, as much for adventure as for profit, which made men seek a direct northern path to Cathay. We read of the rise and fall of the whale-oil industry, of Hudson and his Strait, and Baffin and his Bay. Then the northward attack of Russia and the era of Arctic activity culminating in the ter-

rific tragedy of Franklin's voyage. Of Greeley's ghastly adventure, of the great Nansen and his *Fram*, of Peary's explorations and final expedition to the Pole—its controversial aspect sanely presented.

There is the great story of Greenland itself, first well settled shortly after the year One Thousand.

The eleventh, the twelfth, the thirteenth centuries saw the colonies flourish and prosper; and then quickly, mortally, they declined, so rapidly that by 1400 the colonies of Greenland, with their bishops and



"DANGERS OF THE WHALE FISHERIES"
From Scoresby's "Account of the Arctic Regions" (1820.)

priests, the many people who composed the one hundred and ninety townships, the fine churches and spreading homesteads, were completely gone, like rain in deep snow. Gone suddenly like a note cut short. Gone the very memory of its existence. And the sagas that sing of it came to be regarded not so much as history, but as the recitals of happy dreams of a Never-Never Land, pleasant, pious lies. No one knows what calamity befell, whether they died in the Black Plague of 1349, whether the ice overwhelmed them, or whether they were killed by armies of Eskimo.

From its tragedies of long ago Greenland today has developed into a happy remote world of its own, a unique example of intelligent national administration.

Probably the most spectacular Arctic disaster was the loss of the Franklin Expedition, when its two vessels, the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, with their complement of 192 men, were swallowed by the Arctic wastes in 1847. The story of that tragedy was pieced together in later years as scraps of evidence were found by relief expeditions. In contrasting exploration of that period with what exploration has come to be today, Miss Mirsky writes:

The overwhelming tragedy that descended on the Franklin Expedition could not have happened today. At least it is pleasant to think so. By virtue of the wireless and radio the outside world would have been able to follow the daily progress of the *Erebus* and the *Terror* and participate in everything but the actual task. The exact course would have been known, the death of the leader mourned, the purposeless and doomed floating with the ice-pack appreciated for what it meant, and rescue undertaken as soon as starvation and disease enshadowed them.

Useful for practical purposes, and invaluable for rescue, as radio has come to be for the modern expedition, in some respects perhaps it is not an altogether unmixed blessing. Sometimes, perhaps the stay-at-home world wishes that the radio communication was lacking which inflicts upon it each morning at breakfast the intimate account of all the ventures, actual and fanciful, which have befallen the heroic and geographically remote explorer—at so much a word.

Be that as it may, one finishes this admirable and comprehensive volume with a feeling of gratitude to its author—appreciation for a broad, exciting canvas deftly and authoritatively painted. And the realization, too, that the brave days are not all behind us as regards Polar exploration, for the last few years have seen aviation exploits whose gallantry matches those sagas of by-gone years.

George Palmer Putnam has been director of two Arctic expeditions.

A Discovery and Its Surprising Results

FRANZ ANTON MESMER. By Margaret Goldsmith. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN MULHOLLAND

FRANZ ANTON MESMER, a studious Viennese doctor, conceived an idea he could not seem to develop. In the century and a third since his death others have made of this idea a couple of religions, a stock vaudeville turn, and the scientific treatment of mental diseases. Miss Goldsmith in her excellent study of Mesmer not only gives the biographical details of the man but follows the mesmeric theory along its amazing path through the years.

Mesmer's theory of healing, which even when not fully developed was of demonstrable value, brought the scorn of the medical world instead of serious research. Real charlatans, making use of a combination of trickery and his name, were investigated by science. So throughout her book the author shows the amazing lack of judgment, the bias, and even personal fear, of the scholars of the past hundred and fifty years. Those who fearlessly followed his lead, on the other hand, were the founders of psychotherapy.

Mesmer treated his patients alike, prince as well as peasant, and followed a treatment new in theory but somewhat similar in form to the older exorcists. He was frowned upon by the commercial minded physicians, by those to whom new discoveries were unpopular, and by the conservatives who claimed to see a demonstration of charlatanism preying upon the superstitious. The delighted patients were not considered and he was driven from Austria. Later in Germany and France he had an enormous following, but all scientific recognition was denied. He died in Switzerland, practically forgotten.

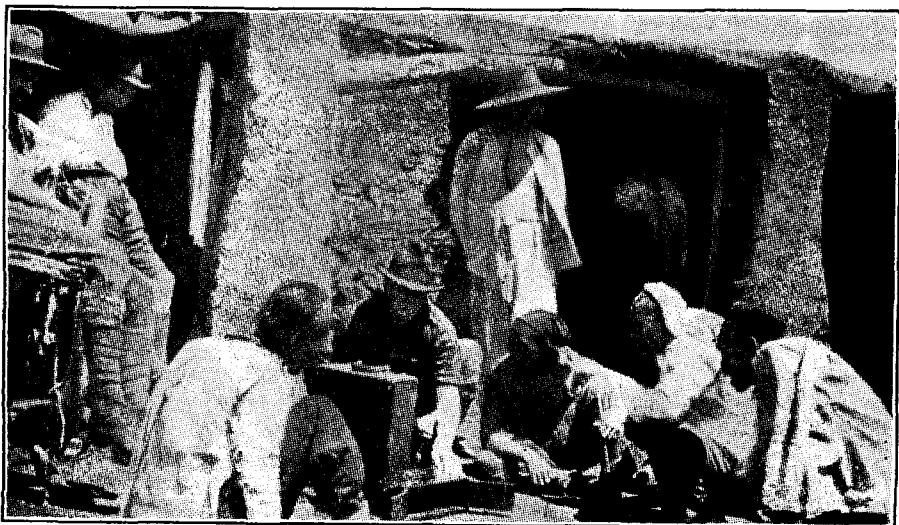
The story goes into detail about the development from mesmeric sleep to supposed trance clairvoyance, to spiritism, and the offshoots to theosophy, to New Thought, and Christian Science. The account also is given of the evolution of Mesmer's therapeutical theory to its present status.

Miss Goldsmith has carefully documented her work, but those with the will to believe in spiritism will raise their voices and yell an hysterical denial of trance mediumship being an accidental offshoot of a misconception of mesmerism. Yet the steps between are logical and clear; a mental case being put to sleep by hypnotism, a person in such a sleep talking, considering such talk a prophecy and diagnosis by God, forgetting God and considering the talk spirit-inspired, forgetting the medium and believing the voice the spirit's own. The steps are just as logical through the mediumistic days of Madame Blavatsky, to theosophy; or from the days when the New Hampshire blacksmith's son started with hypnotism coupled with prescriptions (strong for the rich—weak for the poor) to the time when he discovered the medicines made little difference and began to call his work the "Science of Christ."

The book will not, however, keep the majority of men, and of women, from continuing to give credence to the most fanciful ideas of what a hypnotist, né mesmerist, can do. Even the learned author quotes, "La suggestibilité normale à l'état de veille," and then I regret to record goes on to say, "With these few simple words Bernheim had explained the delusion that an Indian lad climbs up a rope." (Miss Goldsmith, the Indian fakir knows naught of hypnotism nor does he use it.) Most persons will continue to regard hypnotism as an occult gift.

But even though one book cannot do away with all the ignorant beliefs surrounding hypnotism this is certainly the book with which to start. It should be required reading for the educated person.

John Mulholland is editor of The Sphinx.



"By a method of my own for calling forth evil spirits, I drew out voices and tunes from a little box to the great astonishment—and subsequent delight—of the natives."—From "Tents in Mongolia."