

flict. The sonnet on the Piemontese Mr. Belloc regards as incomparably the best of Milton's sonnets, a perfect thing, and as powerful as anything in the language. Miss Macaulay dismisses it in five words: "famous (but not very good)!" The sonnet on Milton's deceased wife, which Mr. Belloc ranks as second only to that on the Piemontese, Miss Macaulay refers to only casually and coldly.

At the conclusion of both the books there stands John Milton, bloody but unbowed, and their respective authors with calm of mind, all passion spent, not unwillingly place the laurel on his devoted head. Both books are important and provocative contributions to Milton criticism. It is not likely, in our generation at least, that Milton will again be submitted to such searching analysis, or that two such brilliant pens will record the finding thereof.

Alexander M. Witherspoon, a member of the department of English of Yale University, is an authority on Milton.

## Stars Fell on Maine

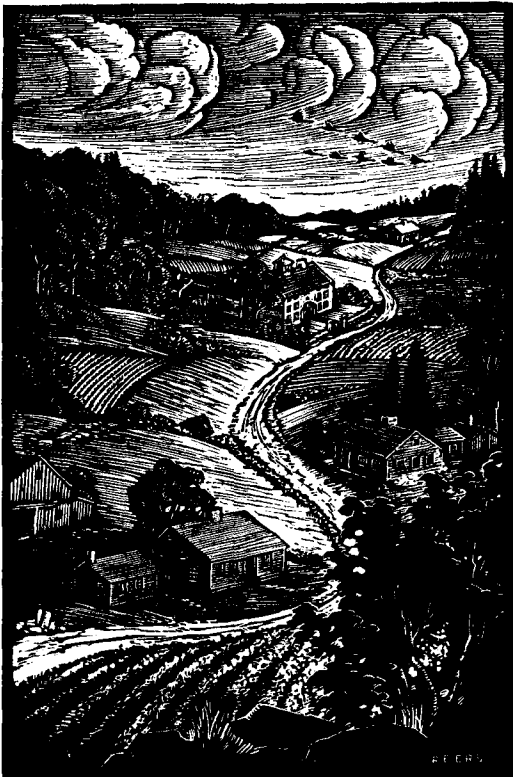
(Continued from first page)

are no better than they should be. Some are not even that. Some of them have to be kept in attics with barred windows. Some of them steal muskmelons. They have sharp tongues and know one another's tender spots. Most of the children in every batch grow up and go away and live cheap, day-to-day lives, or stay home and do it. But in every generation there is also a Gus Bragdon, making hard work into a hymn, a Kate Bragdon, who lives for everybody but herself, or a James Linscott, a swan hatched in a brood of geese. They stand out the way first spring flowers do, lovelier for dead things around them.

These few are more important than all the fierce light and brief bloom of Maine. Their creator here, as in "As the Earth Turns," goes down to things that cut to the heart: a father going in to look at a sleeping son, nearly man-grown, who missed being burned to death in a forest fire, in a single, silent moment—once in a lifetime—of tenderness; an organ with shelves full of stuffed owls, shells, and vases, and red-plush chairs—things that meant life itself to a farmer's wife after twenty years of slavery, and they being moved back to make room for her coffin. Sixty years sweep by, faces change, and Bragdons and Blaines and Linscotts, the three estates of Maine, the workers, the dancers, the loafers, merge into the little boy Jim; but loyalty and love of labor and singing and the poetry of mating remain the same.

Others write of the fading of that other culture of Maine, that of the sea captains. But Mrs. Carroll's culture will go on to later farms, no matter if the sowers of it change. For it is wider than Maine. It includes not only the Blaines and Bragdons, but French Canadians and newer strains to come. It is older than America. It is woven of women working and having children, men plowing, begetting, feeling good, and dying to make room on

their acres for their sons. The Maine color gives it freshness. But it is the oldest and most beautiful thing under the sun, and the youngest. It is the psalm of living. Urgent, happy life that will work out its will no matter what empires perish. If one kind of people will not live it, somebody else will come along and live it for them. And there will always be the few that are like the stars blossoming in a New England pasture.



Jacket design of "A Few Foolish Ones"

# Something About the Fire

CONTROLLING DEPRESSIONS. By Paul H. Douglas. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1935. \$3.

Reviewed by NEIL CAROTHERS

IT is one of the few cheering features of depressions that we learn from each one something more about their character. It is one of the many melancholy features that each one discloses itself as distinctly different from the others. The depression of 1837 taught us that land speculation is bad business, that of 1873 that deflation after war-time expansion means trouble, that of 1893 that a combination of declining gold output and rapid industrial development is highly explosive. What we have to learn from the great world depression of our time is not yet codified and annotated. But already it has revealed one distressing fact, the fact that our modern industrial system is so complex that its phenomena are impossible of analysis, its operation impossible of prediction. This is in no sense a reflection on the economics profession. No social science has been completely mastered, nor will be while there is human progress.

The book under review, Paul Douglas's "Controlling Depressions," illustrates strikingly the status of economic science in our time. There have been published recently a few genuinely worth while books on depression and recovery, notably in England and less notably in America, along with a veritable rain of trash and nonsense. But in this book we have for the first time by an American a comprehensive, all-enveloping attack on the entire depression problem, causes, consequences, and cure. The author is one of the outstanding economists of his time. He brings to bear upon the problem an acute intelligence and an exceptional knowledge of economic facts. He writes with vigor and charm. A hundred abstruse and tangled aspects of depression are laid bare with the skill of a master surgeon. And yet the book begins with a frontal attack on the extant depression theories of economists of world standing, develops the author's own one and only correct explanation, and proceeds to offer as a cure for depression a miscellaneous collection of policies, procedures, reforms, and nostrums, some impracticable, some mutually contradictory, and some demonstrably irrelevant to depression.

At the outset the author makes a fundamental distinction between the "generating" and the "cumulative" causes of depression. The former are those forces of disaster that develop in times of rapidly increasing industrial efficiency and consequent prosperity. They are two in number, the failure of industry to reduce prices commensurately with the decline in costs, which leads to excess profits and over-investment; the failure of the whole system to increase wages, salaries, and farm incomes in proportion to increased output of industry, which leads to insufficient consumption by the masses. Although the author's treatment is original and forceful, his "generating causes" turn out to be old and familiar friends, over-production on one side of the picture, under-consumption on the other. They have been reappearing, dressed in new terminology garb, ever since their first appearance in the thick German phrases of Karl Marx. In the

present state of economic science, even after this analysis by Douglas, the only verdict must be a Scotch verdict, probably guilty but not proved. For example, disparity of farm incomes as a basic cause is a little difficult to accept when we consider either the depression of 1837 or the collapse of 1920 following an era of two-dollar wheat and thirty-cent cotton.

The "cumulative causes" are not causes at all, but merely economic conditions that make depression the sad catastrophe it is, such things as the credit system, which collapses, the rigidity of wages, which hamstring industry fighting declining markets, and fixed debts, which weigh grievously on the victims of fallen prices and stagnant production. The author's analysis of the "cumulative" causes is actually a vivid analysis of the process of depression.

In one chapter a menacing note is struck. The universally accepted doctrine of economists that recovery from depression is inevitable is directly attacked, on both historical and analytical fronts. The issue cannot be settled by analysis, however subtle, and this reviewer merely comments that at this moment the world is steadily recovering from the most tragic of all depressions, despite all the blundering of peoples and governments blindly injuring domestic and international forces working for restoration.

The chapters dealing with the recovery efforts of the present administration are penetrating and discriminating. The economic demerits of the A.A.A. and the N.R.A., the unhappy results of arbitrarily high wages in depression, and the inflationary dangers of the monetary policy are clearly depicted. The Warren monetary schemes are damned with the faintest praise this reviewer has encountered. The author says this gigantic currency program may yet prove useful through the fact that devaluation made available a profit of nearly three billion dollars, which may be available for public works.

Limitations of space absolutely preclude more than a mere listing of the economic devices advocated. In their totality they offer a hopeless contradiction, inasmuch as half of them are offered as preventives of depression, the other half as radical relief measures when a depression has arrived. Among the major proposals are:

- (1) A nationally managed currency and credit system, aimed at a rigidly maintained fixed price level.
- (2) The abolition of all private banks (the so-called Chicago plan) and the substitution of what in reality is merely an arbitrary decrease or increase of paper money by the government, without any credit whatever as we know the term.
- (3) A public works system, based upon excess government receipts in prosperity and excess expenditures in depressions.
- (4) An arbitrary increase of wages with increased production or increased prices, and the converse.
- (5) "A vigorous attempt to obtain flexible prices within the general price system," with a view to encouraging employment in one set of industries as it declines in others.
- (6) The restoration of competition in small industry.
- (7) Government ownership of the railways, other utilities, steel, chemicals, and electric machinery.
- (8) The accumulation of large unemployment insurance reserves in good times for distribution in depression.
- (9) The establishment (if the above named devices fail) of isolated barter production and trade economies for the unemployed, on a scrip basis.

Before this program the most intrepid reviewer stands affrighted. It is a strange and bewildering compound of individualism, fascism, and socialism.

This book will be a positive force in economic literature, a genuine contribution to the economics of depression. But it marks not the end of depression, but

the beginning of controversy. The best time to put out depressions, like fires, is before they start. This book merely demonstrates that we do not yet know exactly what apparatus to use but that we are beginning to understand something about the fire.

Neil Carothers, who is professor of economics and director of the College of Business Administration at Lehigh University, has been not only a teacher but a banker and an economic expert of the United States Department of State.



THE LOST HEAD

Grant attempts to replace it on Conkling's shoulders. From a cartoon by Nast.

## Great Quarreler

THE GENTLEMAN FROM NEW YORK: A Life of Roscoe Conkling. By Donald Barr Chidsey. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1935. \$3.75.

Reviewed by DENIS TILDEN LYNCH

HENRY ADAMS said of Roscoe Conkling: "Great leaders like Sumner and Conkling could not be burlesqued . . . their egotism and factiousness were no laughing matter." Conkling was touchy and temperamental. Being personally honest, he said things without fear. He informed a reporter when old New York comprised less than 1,000,000 inhabitants, that about a hundred of them were reformers, all of them, of course, to the pseudo-reformers. Conkling was the Republican boss of the state, and subsequently he denounced them as men who paraded their own thin veneering of superior virtue, whose stock in trade was rancid, canting self-righteousness, and whose real object was office and plunder. In that Conklingsque diatribe he coined the classic exclamation: "When Dr. Johnson defined patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel, he ignored the enormous possibilities of the word reform."

Godkin called him "the great American quarreler." Several of his quarrels are an indelible part of our history. One of them temporarily wrecked the Republican party in the nation.

Mr. Chidsey's book attests his diligence in research, but he displays little of that equally important prerequisite of an historian, the judicial mind. Dealing with the most intimate form of history, the biographer cannot be lacking in the perception of the limitations of his subject and his contemporaries, and he must weigh dispassionately, and express, without bitterness, disagreeable conclusions. The author of "The Gentleman from New York" dismisses one of the rumors concerning the daughter of Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase and Conkling with:

. . . It libels her common sense. It makes her not only selfish and vindictive, . . . but also a damned fool. It makes Conkling a damned fool too, and a traitor, and a liar.

President Hayes he calls "a nice little man. . . ." Of Garfield he writes: ". . . there was that in his manner which today we would call Y.M.C.A.-ish, or Boy Scouty." When he describes Conkling in defeat, Conkling—to us, at least—the ever-proud, he describes him as truckling for aid: "Gone was that God-damn-you stare."

Perhaps all this was commendable restraint on the part of an author who irretrievably enmeshed himself in the tangled skein of New York politics.



## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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### A Calloused Generation

A book lies on our desk called "An Almanac for Moderns," by Donald Culross Peattie, charmingly illustrated by Lynd Ward. Reading its day by day record of the country—red-wing blackbirds in the marshes, Spring constellations in the April sky, comments upon the specialists in nature—one remembers a vanished literature of quiet and reflection upon which many of our middle generation were nourished. Not only Thoreau, and Burroughs, and Muir, the nature writers, but dozens of authors of the personal and reflective essay, in which Oliver Wendell Holmes, and after him Samuel Crothers, and before him in more transcendental mood, Emerson himself, were practitioners, used to be the companions of the youth of that generation, and set a tone and made a background for the mind now unhappily lost.

We say unhappily, because the time has come to defend what for a decade or so every one has been ready to blame for a lack of realistic thinking, an avoidance of awkward issues, usually economic, and "mildness" if not "genteelness" in general. For, say what you will of necessity and changing taste, it is unfortunate that the generation now just coming into power has been reared upon a literature, often brilliant, very stimulating, and both in-reaching and outgoing, yet still a literature in which violence sometimes and sensationalism very often have been subtly or obviously present. This is true of Europe, as it is true of America—and of journalism and of propaganda even more than of literature. Nor do the many obvious exceptions, some of them among the best works of contemporary literature, detract from the validity of this general statement. For twenty years young minds have been fed upon violence and sensationalism because since 1914 it has been a violent and sensational world.

This is no sermon on "oughts" and "shouldn'ts" which is being written here, but a defense, a double defense. First of the literature of quiet and reflection which, however out of tune with the violent present, is an indispensable auxiliary to the advance and even to the existence of a matured civilization. Next, of the new generation, which threatens to be a war generation, and in several European countries and among too many of our own countrymen, seems to be ready to become a war generation. For it is clear now that it has been calloused by too much reading

about a defeatist world, and that may be one reason why it seems to be ready to take on a new adventure in destruction with a lack of imagination, or of interest in a future possible for civilized living, which is appalling to the elders who can remember both war and destruction, and also a time of youth when man's mind did not feed so nervously upon speed, sex, fear, economics, and social change.

The famous phrase of Thucydides, "education by violence," written of the Greeks who were taught by the misfortunes of a culture wrecked by war, is apparently only a half truth; was, indeed, a half truth for the Greeks, who learned little and kept less. Violence does not educate, nor sensationalism either—they condition the mind, making it realistic where it may have been sentimental, but hardening and stiffening it also, until it becomes unresponsive either to suffering or to determined hope.

The mind grows by what it feeds upon, and nourishment of this kind is indispensable for a culture that proposes to realize the ideals set forth by all the philosophers.



"PUT THE CARE AND FEEDING OF INFANTS IN HERE, AND WE CAN PUT WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE BABY COMES UP IN THE GUEST ROOM."

## Letters to the Editor: Robinson's Tribute to Hardy; The Plight of a Haitian Writer

### Two Sonnets

SIR:—The death of Edwin Arlington Robinson recalls to my mind several questions dealing with his early life at Gardiner, Maine. Some time before he was 26, Robinson wrote an Italian sonnet on Thomas Hardy. It was printed in *The Critic* (24: 348) for November 23, 1895, and then apparently forgotten. Why? The author never collected this poem. Why? None of his biographers have ever made use of the information it provides. Why? And just what information does it supply? The poem was—

#### FOR A BOOK BY THOMAS HARDY

With searching feet, through dark circuitous ways,  
I plunged and stumbled; round me, far and near,  
Quaint hordes of eyeless phantoms did appear,  
Twisting and turning in a bootless chase,  
When, like an exile given by God's grace  
To feel once more a human atmosphere,  
I caught the world's first murmur, large and clear,  
Flung from a singing river's endless race.  
Then, through a magic twilight from below,  
I heard its grand sad song as in a dream:  
Life's wild infinity of mirth and woe  
It sang me; and, with many a changing gleam,  
Across the music of its onward flow  
I saw the cottage lights of Wessex beam.

And if in this sonnet we may find the record of the influence of the Wessex Novels on the mind of the young man in Gardiner, Maine, is it purely fanciful to suppose that, in another Italian sonnet, published shortly after Hardy's death, we are justified in tracing the record of Robinson's emergence from under the spell of "one in doubt,"—Hardy, whose doubts and sorrows had, rightly or wrongly, gained for him the title of pessimist? I refer to "A Christmas Sonnet: For One in Doubt," the last of the book of *Sonnets* (p. 89) published in 1928. May not Robinson's sonnet be read while remembering that Hardy had published a poem on "God's Funeral"? Robinson wrote:

While you that in your sorrow disavow  
Service and hope, see love and brotherhood  
Far off as ever, it will do no good  
For you to wear his thorns upon your brow

For doubt of him. And should you question how  
To serve him best, he might say, if he could,  
"Whether or not the cross was made of wood  
Whereon you nailed me, is no matter now."

Though other saviors have in older lore  
A Legend, and for older gods have died—  
Though death may wear the crown it always wore  
And ignorance be still the sword of pride—  
Something is here that was not here before,  
And strangely has not yet been crucified.

And is it foolish to recall that both poets wrote about Tristram?

CARL J. WEBER.

Colby College  
Waterville, Maine.

### Jacques Roumain

SIR:—May we bring to the attention of readers of *The Saturday Review* a matter of interest to all those concerned with the question of literary freedom? Haiti's leading poet and writer, Jacques Roumain, is now lying ill with malaria in a vermin-infested prison in Port-au-Prince, sentenced to three years' imprisonment on false charges.

Roumain has been for some years a literary figure of great interest. Born of a wealthy and cultured Haitian family, and educated in the best schools and universities of Europe, he was moved to turn away from his traditions and draw his poetic inspiration from the racial background of his own people. He has published poems, some volumes of short stories, and one novel, "La Montagne Encelee"—probably his best-known work which in a pure and limpid French reflects the barbaric warmth and color of primitive Haitian life.

In writing of the simple lower-class Haitians Roumain found himself passionately moved by their poverty and sufferings and incurred the hostility of the present government by becoming their advocate. He was arrested on a trumped-up charge of importing bombs into Haiti and brought before a military tribunal. Though the most careful official search revealed only books and pamphlets, he was sentenced on October 23, 1934, to three years in prison.

Friends in the United States who admire Roumain's outstanding achievements as poet and interpreter of his people and who know the fire and selfless devotion of his personality have formed a committee to work for his release. Among its sponsors under the chairmanship of Carleton Beals are Louis Adamic, Sherwood Anderson, Stephen Vincent Benét, Van Wyck Brooks, John Chamberlain, Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank, Robert Herrick, John Haynes Holmes, Langston Hughes, Arthur Kreyenbourg, Robert Morss Lovett, Archibald MacLeish, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and some forty more writers, artists, and public men.

The Committee urges everyone interested in the cause of justice, free speech, and the fate of intellectuals under auto-

cratic governments to draw up protests to President Stenio Vincent and send them to the Committee for the Release of Jacques Roumain, 74 Macdougall Street, New York, N. Y., whence they will be forwarded to Haiti. Copies of postcards of protest and petitions to be signed may also be procured from the Committee.

THE COMMITTEE.

New York City.

### Plagiarizing Book Titles

SIR:—The protection of mental products has been the subject of earnest copyright fights since years ago when Mark Twain, George Walton Green, and Major George Haven Putnam argued the matter in Congress. There exists today a more insidious danger, because there is not legal redress and because it is practised for the most part by people who do not care about their reputations, at least as writers. I refer to the adoption of book titles already published or to the adoption of plots based on some material theoretically considered as public property.

The copyright law as now constituted rules that a book title cannot be copyrighted. There is an underlying reason why an ordinary title like, let us say, "The Life of George Washington" should not be protected. But, if a Washington biographer calls his book "The Mammoth of Mt. Vernon," or a writer reminisces under the title "While Rome Burns" or a retired publisher writes "Chronicles of Barabbas," I do not think that any more Burning Romans or Chronicing Barabbasses should be permitted to imitate the titles for a period of, perhaps, three years. Especially do I think moving picture operators should be prevented from adopting titles and plots making only such changes as leave them technically safe. Of course, well known names are paid for; but I have seen cases where a tricky title by a little known author is adopted for movie purposes without public acknowledgment to the author's widow—much less payment. Legal or not that sort of thing is unethical or certainly would not be upheld in courts of equity. I suggest that neither the difficulty of arriving at proper legislation nor the possibilities of offending certain interests should prevent further investigation of underlying principles. There is apparently recourse to common law where damage can be proven. But, even where no monetary damage can be proved, an author likes to get credit for his mental ingenuity.

HORACE GREEN.

King's Point, L. I.

### Felix O. C. Darley

SIR:—I am anxious to gather all available facts about the life and work of the American illustrator, Felix O. C. Darley. Will those who have a knowledge of him, or any members of his family who may be still living, please be good enough to advise me? I would also be very greatly indebted to anyone who might be able to place in my hands letters or other interesting material relating to Darley or, to inform me as to the whereabouts of original drawings by him. The utmost care will be taken of any material.

REGINALD BREWER.

Fisher Bldg.,  
Detroit, Mich.

## The Saturday Review recommends

### The Saturday Review Recommends:

A FEW FOOLISH ONES. By GLADYS HASTY CARROLL.  
Macmillan. The story of a man and a community.

CHRONICLES OF BARABBAS. By GEORGE H. DORAN.  
Harcourt, Brace. A publisher's reminiscences.

WISH AND WISDOM. By JOSEPH JASTROW. Appleton-Century. A history of human eccentricity.

### This Less Recent Book:

FEBRUARY HILL. By VICTORIA LINCOLN. Farrar & Rinehart. The tale of an extraordinary family.