

Orne Jewett, and Edith Wharton. We printed some of the last short stories by Howells and Aldrich; and a new note was struck now and then by Jack London, John Buchan, and Mary Austin. After some years of alienation, Lafcadio Hearn began again to send us his marvellous sketches of Japan. It was on the whole a dull decade for American poetry; but I recall with especial pleasure William Vaughn Moody's noble "Ode in Time of Hesitation" written on the Philippine theme in 1900, Edwin Arlington Robinson's haunting "Calverly's," and the faultless tiny lyrics of my friend Father Tabb.

More and more, during the post-war years and especially since my retirement, I have turned to books for reinforcement of my youthful faith in progress. The most durable foundations for hope for a better future for humanity seem to me to be found in history, literature, and religion. I should, of course, add "science" if I thought that I had a really scientific mind. I read, like everyone else, about the new physics, the new chemistry, the new astronomy, but this reading does not transform the world for me, as it does for many of my friends. When my class at Williams held its fiftieth reunion in 1931, all the other men, representing various professions, proclaimed their wonder and satisfaction in the advance of the world since our graduation, particularly in the application of scientific discoveries to the conveniences and comforts of life. There was the usual glorification of telephone and radio and motor car and airplane and all that; and even the stock market, just then, seemed to be picking up a little. I did not dissent openly, but I felt singularly isolated. I was almost the only representative of literature at the table, and what competent critic would assert that the literature produced in America, England, and France during the previous half-century, has rivalled, either in sheer power or in beauty, the books produced during the fifty years between 1831 and 1881? I had read, presumably, more contemporary prose and verse than any of my classmates, since it was my professional business to do so. I had no quarrel with the preceding half-century except this: that in the one kind of activity in which I was professionally interested, it had failed to keep pace with the material advance which my classmates were celebrating. Literature's turn may come again, of course. Some unknown American author may publish tomorrow as good a book as "Moby Dick," "The Scarlet Letter," Emerson's "Essays," "Walden," "Leaves of Grass," or "Huckleberry Finn"; but I have been waiting a long time for it.

Bliss Perry is professor of English at Harvard University. The preceding article in expanded form is to appear in "And Gladly Teach" shortly to be published by Houghton Mifflin. The last paragraph has here been transposed from its position at the close of the book.

## Breakdowns and Neuroses

THE NERVOUS BREAKDOWN. By the Editors of Fortune. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1935. \$1.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH, M.D.

EVERY doctor is repeatedly confounded by the fantastic conceptions entertained by his patients of the mechanism by which they live and have their being. For the everyday man is probably more ignorant of the workings of his own body than he is of any other subject near to him. If this state of affairs has been abated by the endless books, lectures, and so-called physiology classes designed in the past few years to educate him, the signs are few indeed, yet one cannot but rejoice whenever there appears another attempt as excellent as this to shed a little light on the general ignorance. Even when the teacher has at one's command orderly proven facts—facts which can be seen with the eyes, with the microscope and test-tube, too often the result in the mind of the listener is distortion and confusion. How much more difficult to present to the everyday man the whys and hows of his untouchable, unseeable mind, his soul, his libido, *et al!* One recalls shudderingly the tea-party chatter of Freud and dreams so fashionable a few years ago. All the more credit then to the authors of this little book, who have boldly accepted the difficulties in a manner to warrant only appreciative gratitude.

Confronted with the premise that neuroses are as "widespread as the common cold," they started a little research all their own on the popularly called "nervous breakdown." (This they define as "a serious neurosis." A "neurosis is produced by the collision of a neurotic character with a problem it can't surmount." What is a neurotic character? The term "means practically anyone at all.") Their investigation carried them into a very jungle of "schools" and theories. Out of the tangle they eliminated what must have been an appalling amount, and they retained only eighty-five pages. These they submitted to the experts already drawn upon, but even yet they could not always agree, so the protests are added as footnotes to the appropriate page. Surely fair enough.

If the book did no more than to drive home the fact that in a civilization where, as Thoreau declared, "most men live lives of quiet desperation," none but the moron can claim immunity from maladjustments and threatened "breakdowns," it would be worth all the trouble it cost. The odium so long associated with mental and nervous disorders is by no means outgrown. Yet we are told that "everyone is unbalanced enough to be vulnerable to some type or other of psychological strain." And still the vast majority—and this in-

cludes many doctors who should know better—dismiss their neighbors' frustrating fears and sickened wills as "just imagination," and never cease their futile and cruel admonitions to "brace up!"

Having established the universality—almost normality—of the complaint, the authors proceed to furnish us with a concise differentiation between the psychoses (the so-called insanities) and the neuroses. We are encouraged by the statement that despite his fears the neurotic almost never "goes insane." We are given the tentative classification, now generally adopted, of both types of disorders and a summary of the analysis of the factors contributing to the breakdown. This dispels the bugaboo of overwork and also dispenses with the theory that only the idle and the wealthy enjoy the privileges of the disease. Cities of from 25,000 to 100,000, it seems, offer more satisfying conditions for the spirit than do either villages or the larger cities. Surprisingly enough the depression seems thus far not to have increased the number of nervous and mental cases.

When they approach the subject of treatment the authors speak in far less confident tones. They are—and naturally so, perhaps—impatient of the slow progress medicine has made in this field. To this reviewer they seem to have underestimated the distance the profession has traveled since Freud's epoch-making theories changed so utterly our conception of human mentality. After all, Freud is still alive, and the time has not been long for a revolution in thinking.

In the last chapters the reader is given a picture of the methods of psychoanalysis. There is no suggestion of a cure—all here. We are warned that even if the expense (from \$2,600 to \$13,000) and the time involved (five visits per week for a year) did not limit the general usefulness, it succeeds for only the comparative few. The book ends with a suggestion of the tendency in America at least, away from Freud and his psychoanalysis toward the "psychobiology" of Adolph Meyer with its emphasis now embracing not only all of the patient's personality but every aspect of his environment and way of life.

All in all one can find practically nothing to condemn and much to praise in this admirable little study. A copy might well be placed in every doctor's waiting-room. Here is a sane preliminary sketch of a picture which presents more complexities than all other medical problems combined—a picture which may require another century before it can be framed and hung—which vitally concerns every one of us. The magazine *Fortune* is to be congratulated on having produced so valuable a book.

Mabel S. Ulrich is a physician of Minneapolis who for a number of years did yeoman service in public health work. Her interests, however, were literary as well as medical, and in addition to her science she has run several excellent bookshops.

# The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

## The Folder

ONCE I wrote here, years ago, about Chipmunks in the Wall (or perhaps they were mice); how I listened to them frolicking behind my bookshelves; scraping, scuffling, nibbling; freaking my silence with a lace of sound. But I didn't know exactly what they'd been at until I began carrying out a lot of books to the Knothole

Exactly behind the ten foot shelvage of my books about Shakespeare they'd been busiest. There I found a collection of dry cherrystones, each one drilled hollow with clean-bored indenture. They had taken many more bites than one. I thought kindly of their secret labors, their patient gritting edacity. It wasn't even Will himself they were after; it was their own Little Kernel Stories . . . and I thought of all the Shakespeare Schlars, gnawing away.

WE REFERRED (Bowling Green, June 1 and 8) to the saying so frequently imputed to Voltaire, "I do not agree with a word you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it"; and we noted that Mr. Harry Weinberger, attorney in letters as well as at law, had rummaged Voltaire's works in vain for the quotation. As also had Mr. Ben De Casseres and other Voltaireans.

Mr. Weinberger now reports the highly interesting fact that this excellent line, familiar by so frequent quotation, is rather to be attributed to one of Voltaire's biographers, "S. G. Tallentyre" (E. Beatrice Hall). Miss Tallentyre writes to Mr. Weinberger that she used the phrase in her book *The Friends of Voltaire* (1907) "as a description of Voltaire's attitude to Helvetius—and more widely, to the freedom of expression in general. I do not think and did not intend to imply that Voltaire used these words *verbatim*, and should be surprised if they are found in any of his works. They are rather a *paraphrase* of Voltaire's words in the Essay on Tolerance—*Think for yourselves and let others enjoy the privilege to do so too.*"

George Currie in the Brooklyn Eagle, commenting on Mr. Weinberger's successful sleuthing, says:

"One might make a pretty sound bet that what M. Voltaire is mostly remembered for is the quotation he didn't make, which is an irony that François Marie Arouet would have cackled over in the full savage misery of his old age."

THE OLD MANDARIN'S version of a similar

thought, we suddenly remember, was: *My wrongness is dearer to me than your rightness.*

The Green of August 3 ("Usage, U. S. A.") evoked a number of interesting letters and reproaches. Several correspondents point out that *pretty* in the sense of *fairly* or *rather* is not exclusively an Americanism. Professor Stuart Robertson (author of *The Development of Modern English*, which I haven't seen) writes:—

"Is *pretty* an Americanism? I happen to



have noticed it frequently in the works of Otto Jespersen, where I have been struck by a certain incongruity in such a colloquialism—as I thought it—in a formal context. If it is a purely American colloquialism, I wonder how it happens that Jespersen has appropriated it."

And Mr. Finlay Ferguson (Norfolk, Va.) quotes from *Great Expectations*, chapter IX:—

"Well, boy," Uncle Pumblechook began. "How did you get on up town?"

I answered, "Pretty well, sir."

"Pretty well?" Mr. Pumblechook repeated. "Pretty well is no answer. Tell me what you mean by pretty well, boy?" . . . I reflected for some time, and then answered as if I had discovered a new idea, "I mean pretty well."

Speaking of the learned Dr. Otto Jespersen (of Copenhagen), in his valuable *Essentials of English Grammar* (1933) he quotes a Chinese grammarian as saying that in many familiar usages "English commonsense triumphs over grammatical nonsense."

I am reminded again of the excellent advertising sign in Newark—I think I've mentioned it before—*Roberts Erasers Correct Mistakes in Any Language.*

E. R. E., Marshall, Minnesota, writes:—

"Having recently visited my mother's birthplace near Randolph Center, Vermont, I must tell you that I crossed the East Branch, West Branch, Turnbridge Branch and I think Middle Branch all of the White River—so "branch" isn't All Southern. And on the old farm were Pasture Brook and Peppermint Brook.

"Back in the eighties my mother and sister made a "slumber robe" by crocheting colored yarns into squares and sewing these together—used as an afghan.

"In this locality we "keep tabs on," never "keep tabs on."

"Your review creates in me a strong desire to see Mr. Horwill's book."

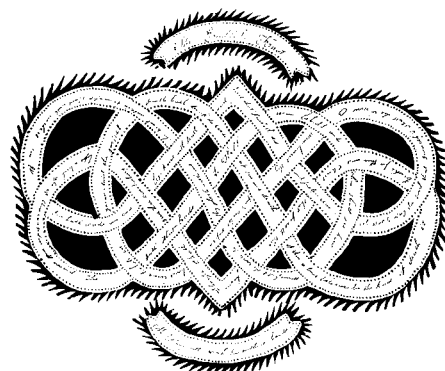
P. W., turning out an old trunk in a New Jersey attic, came upon a pleasant example of the scissors-and-paper work of a hundred years ago.

*The Endless Knot*, it is called: the nodulated ribbon of text is a poem (all one sentence) beginning "Man, behold, and thou shall see How manifold thy evils be," and ending "Avoid the path that leads to hell." If the sentiment were less evangelical the design would make an agreeable bookplate. The bottom scroll says *M. A. Honeywell's work done without hands*—by which

she meant, one supposes, all with scissors.

THE CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT shows us a delightful letter from an ex-abonnée in Michigan. This might well go in the text books as the ideal P. P. C. letter for the Parting Subscriber:—

"I am just simply sick to death of literature and smartness, etc. *Candide* presents the only solution to living I've found up to date. I began to read at the normal age of five or six and ran through the Grimm Bros., Elsie Dinsmore, Rex Beach, passing on to Euripides, the Russians, the Little Theatre movement, coming later to Eugene O'Neill, *Look Homeward Angel*, Hemingway and then I quit at the ripe



"THE ENDLESS KNOT"