

The Saturday Review

OF LITERATURE

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On Being Sane

A correspondent objects that this Review is too sane. It was sane in the pre-Depression days (so he says) when sanity was an asset. But with one family out of five on relief and unemployment not decreasing, it still stays sane. With thousands of Americans sinking into the jungles of hand-to-mouth living, or exiled to tobacco road, it still stays sane. Yes (and we may add to his grievings) with Father Coughlin charging the radio waves with an ignorant nationalism, and Huey Long experimenting with a Balkan dictatorship, and the newspapers trying the Hauptmann case, and Hollywood turning good novelists into bad carpenters of sob stories, it still tries to stay sane.

He objects also to our dallying with the good books, good reading of yesteryear, while Rome burns (to the hoot of sirens) each day about us. Rome has burned before, many times, and there have been ages which in misery, disintegration, and danger of collapse far exceeded our own; but the New Testament was not thrown into the bonfire every time Christianity failed to work, nor was it regarded as a weakness in times of revolution to recall the books which have survived revolution, and will continue to do so, because they have in them something independent of fate.

Our correspondent may belong to that class whom Louis Adamic, himself certainly no reactionary, calls the "jittery" Americans. "Jittery" because they have no roots, no sense of stability, no inner life. We all know why, and they are not to blame. The winds of doctrine blow them about, and social upheaval topples them over. There is nothing to hold on to, and they have dropped what they held. With so much unexpected happening, it seems to them frivolous, almost sacrilegious, to think of anything but the present. If such a case of "jitters" had been on Paul's ship off Melita he would have run for a stick of wood and a rope, and let the morale of the crew go down the gale.

All this is excusable, but not quite sane. It is a mild hysteria, natural, but not helpful. Some one has to keep his head. Ours is none too steady as we view civilization speeding up its V-8 engine on a skiddy road with a hairpin turn ahead, propagandists at the wheel, super-nationalists stepping on the gas, safety-by-armor pulling the brakes out roots and all, and an isolationist in the back seat shouting "To hell with Europe," with both eyes

shut. But we try to stay sane, and are proud of the attempt, if not of the results. And if Dante, Shakespeare, Christ, Goethe, Voltaire, Dickens, and even Mark Twain and Trollope are irrelevant—why so are we, and proud of it.

The March of Time

Our old colleagues of *Time* magazine are making a stir with the release of the first "March of Time" newsreel. Pre-view observers agreed that the five sequences, comparatively long, making use of old shots as well as new, and even of staged "retakes" of events in order to tell complete stories, do a good pioneering job in explaining the facts behind the news. Other newsreels, apparently anticipating the band-wagon, have recently shown a tendency towards sequences that give the news in chapters instead of paragraphs.

This method takes editing; and the more editing, the more opportunity for expression of opinion. So far, the new type of newsreel has shown small, but still noticeable, signs of "interpreting." Will these signs multiply? Will the news-film become a journal of opinion?



"SEVEN MILLION PEOPLE IN THE CITY AND YOU HAVE TO BITE THE BOOK REVIEWER OF THE NEW YORK TIMES!"

Letters to the Editor: *The Sources of "Musa Dagb"; Samuel Butler in Taormina*

Memories of the Zeitoun Exiles

SIR:—I have just completed the reading of Franz Werfel's great novel, "The Forty Days of Musa Dagb," which you rightly describe not only as an historical novel of great significance but also a "great story of human nature in crisis."

The reading of the story, as you will readily imagine, has been a strangely moving experience to me, for it has recreated a past and brought back events which seem to belong to another life. Many of these events are a painful memory, but not a few of them revealed the finer qualities of the soul which only appear in moments of great stress.

I remember well the day on which the Zeitoun exiles reached Marash and my visit to the Mutessarif on behalf of Andreassian (Aram Tomasian of the story) which resulted in the permit which allowed him and his family to go to Yoghannoghlook. My diary gives the date as May 15th, 1915. Both Andreassian and Nokhoudian, the pastor of Bitias, were my students. I met Andreassian again in Egypt after the war, but Nokhoudian was lost at Der Zor.

The account of the Zeitoun episode is remarkably exact and could only have been derived from one or two possible sources. I knew Zeitoun very well, having frequently visited it. On the evening after reading Franz Werfel's book, I travelled back in thought over the rugged path which I had so often travelled, which leads from Marash, over Akher Dagb, to Zeitoun, and recalled many figures in that hill fortress town, who were my friends, whose homes I had known in happier days, but who had perished from hunger in the desert or at the hands of the Turks.

E. C. WOODLEY.

Quebec, Canada.

[Editor's note: Mr. Woodley appears as the American Consul in "The Forty Days of Musa Dagb."]

Butler and the "Odyssey"

SIR:—I was greatly interested to read Quercus's brief allusion in *Trade Winds* to Mr. Desmond MacCarthy as "some one who knew, personally and actually knew . . . our old idol Samuel Butler." It was my good fortune to have a brief personal acquaintance with Mr. Butler early in June, 1901, at Taormina. My wife and I were staying at the Hotel Timeo; the tourist season was over, and there were

only four guests besides ourselves at the long table-d'hôte: an American lady, widow of an Italian, with her two daughters, and an elderly gentleman, plainly English. As we were so few we naturally fell into conversation, the Englishman being the last to join it. The eldest lady asked us where we had spent the winter; and when I replied "in Athens" he seemed to be much interested, and we were soon comparing notes. After a while he said that he was Samuel Butler, and spoke of his interest in Greek subjects. We stayed a few days longer at the Timeo, and I had several other conversations with him. He gradually became quite friendly and talkative, and lent me reprints of a few articles by himself published in a small Sicilian periodical devoted to Sicilian history and antiquities. Also he spoke with evident pride of the compliment that had been paid him by the authorities of Trapani, where he spent a number of years, in naming a street after him.

The topic that seemed to interest him most, however, was his own extraordinary theory about the authorship of the "Odyssey"; and when I ventured, very cautiously, to suggest that possibly he was not entirely in earnest about it he bristled up at once.

EDWARD DELAVAN PERRY.

Columbia University, New York City.

In Darkest Travel Books

SIR:—As hundreds of travel books are published annually, writers should be warned that in many cases they have burst into print without eliminating inexcusable errors. Not long ago I reviewed a book in which the writer mentions seeing a rattlesnake in Southern Rhodesia. Another mentions tigers in East Africa and, although the Boer hunter in the Transvaal calls the leopard by the name of "tiger," there are no tigers on the African mainland except those in a cage at the Johannesburg zoo. Another work that was recently published confuses the Congo and Zambesi Rivers and still another speaks of the Masai tribe of East Africa as a race of cannibals. As a student of Africa, I find that errors such as these destroy my confidence in writers on African travel.

Unfortunately even the best of our modern writers seem to throw caution to the winds when they begin to write about the "Dark Continent." The late Mr. Jacob Wassermann is a very good case in point. In 1932 he published "Bula Matari," the life of Henry M. Stanley. Mr. Wassermann, in writing of his boyhood idol, seems to have known surprisingly little about him and practically nothing about the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition and the subsequent controversy over the fate of the rear column. Readers of Stanley's "In Darkest Africa" will recall the terrible fate that befell the party which Stanley was obliged to leave at Yambuya on the Aruwimi tributary of the Congo. Despite the fact that there is an extensive literature on the Rear Column, Mr. Wassermann never refers to it and his bibliography is inadequate for more than a sketch of Stanley's life. Mr. Wassermann's conclusions as to the collapse of the English personnel of this branch of the expe-

dition—he claims that these young Englishmen were lured to their fate by the blandishments of native belles—are amusing but have little foundation in fact. Near the end of the book Mr. Wassermann mentions the birth of Mr. Stanley's son when the great explorer was on the brink of the grave. It so happens that the Stanleys adopted a son but Mr. Wassermann does not seem to be aware of this.

One of the greatest travesties on human intelligence was the material published in "Trader Horn." The public should be warned that the attacks upon David Livingstone have absolutely no basis in fact. The witty asides of Trader Horn and remarks about the great missionary's moral lapses are pure smut. Dr. David Livingstone was no saint in the eyes of many but there has never been a single insinuation regarding his morals from African sources. Most of these stories had their origins in bar rooms. . . .

A little time devoted to ethnology, zoology, geography, and history would eliminate these errors. Unless authors are willing to take this extra trouble (after all a very necessary task) their works will suffer accordingly and those of us who read their books will continue to throw them aside with distaste. In a story of adventure, sensation is infinitely more important than truth. In a book of travel or biography, truth is infinitely more important than sensation. There is no happy medium. The book must be either the one or the other.

JULIAN W. FEISS.

Cleveland, Ohio.

Response

SIR:—Please allow me to express to you my deep gratitude for the generous response to my appeal for library books published in *The Saturday Review of Literature* of October 27th. It is quite evident that your intelligent readers realize that a prison library means more to the inmates than a source of entertainment; that it is of the utmost value in the rehabilitation of fallen men and, besides keeping the prisoners out of trouble and relieving the tension of close confinement, the library causes the men to absorb, either directly or indirectly, the benefits of education that they would not be able to obtain otherwise.

In addition to the thanks I owe to you, I want to acknowledge the kindness of Mr. G. B. Bingham, of Burrows Brothers, Cleveland, Ohio; Miss Edith M. Phelps, of the H. W. Wilson Company; Mr. Julian R. Tinkham, of Upper Montclair, N. J.; Mr. A. H. Heward, of Burnwood, N. Y.; Mr. Frank Henry, of Doubleday, Doran & Company; Miss Elsie C. Lieman, of New York City; Miss Caroline Pattengell, of Ann Arbor, Mich.; Mrs. Yandell Henderson, of New Haven, Conn.; and Mr. Franklin Wentworth through the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. As a result of my appeal, these good people have enriched our library to the extent of 510 volumes, and have left a warm feeling in my heart.

Offering the thanks of 4,300 men, I am
K. E. WALL, Chaplain.

Ohio Penitentiary,
Columbus, Ohio.

The Saturday Review recommends

This List of Current Books:

- LEAN MEN. By RALPH BATES. Macmillan. A novel of modern Spain in revolution.
RATS, LICE AND HISTORY. By HANS ZINSSER. Little, Brown. A biography of typhus fever with excursions along the bypaths of literature.
R. E. LEE. By DOUGLAS SOUTHAL FREEMAN. Scribners. The concluding volumes of an outstanding biography.

This Less Recent Book:

- BARNUM. By M. R. WERNER. The chronicle of a spectacular career.

A Genius in the Santa Fe Colony

NO QUARTER GIVEN. By Paul Horgan. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ELIZABETH SHEPLEY SERGEANT

PAUL HORGAN, of New Mexico, has placed his second novel in a setting he knows intimately and renders with affectionate or clinical exactitude. But New Mexico throughout is rather a decor than a theme. Palace Avenue, Santa Fe, is germane to the story because it offers a refuge to a tuberculous composer, deposited there by a rich and flitting wife—like a piece of superfluous luggage, and along with the monkeys, and under the guard of a trained nurse and an old family dragon.

How David, his young stepson—incidentally, the most sensitively conceived character in the book—rescues Edmund Abbey from his wife Georgia (David's mother), one of those females of the species who seek artists for the sake of their social consequences and their sensual gifts; how Maggie Michaelis, an actress in retreat, helps him to a love affair, a divorce, and a last flare-up of life and creative power; how, full of the consumptive's illusions and the artist's indifference to the means which give him security for a major talent, Edmund dies in Albuquerque—this is the immediate story. Gifted invalids like Abbey, sophisticated buccaneers like Georgia and her shallow train of friends, adolescent schoolboys brought to adult perceptions by the violations of family battles, self-reliant artists or near artists like Maggie, who come to the Southwest to lick their wounds, are not unknown in Santa Fe colonist population. The minor New Mexico characters of "native" origin are equally credible—indeed rather more so. The voluble and frank-spoken old Mexican woman, her opposite the old Mrs. Mannering who combines the pioneer and the diplomatic tradition; even the Indians at the Santo Domingo corn dance, are living and soundly recognizable.

But this is merely the foreground of the story. In the background lies the human pattern of life—hesitating, insecure, and dimly though deftly apprehended by the hero. From it evolved the insistent "genius" of an American composer so abundantly presented by the author. Interludes conceived and introduced in "Point Counter Point" fashion allow us to travel back to Pennsylvania, where Edmund grew up; to Dorchester, to New York, to Vienna, to New York again. Here a host of minor characters swarm out of the close-written pages—among them an Italian conductor and a Russian conductor, who are the consoling and protecting angels of a young musician struggling to hold his own against a blend of idealism and venality.

"No Quarter Given" implies that the struggle was a crucial one. But somehow, when Horgan the objective ironist, who impales Georgia or Mannheimer on a cruel pin, becomes Horgan the recorder of the artistic temperament, there is a shift of mood, a faltering in clear-cut analysis. Would not Edmund Abbey's story be more salient if the hero's weaknesses also were viewed in the light of their consequences—such consequences as marrying Georgia for her money? Edmund seems not quite honest with himself hereabouts. He is full of scruples and passivity. He is almost a ghost—for everything happens to him instead of his bringing it to pass—women and jobs included. Through his indefinite outline, devoid of idiosyncrasy, the deep theme of the book—the conflict between the undeveloped and often unfeeling human life that an artist lives and the inevitable power of his work—is not completely realized despite a novel of seventy-five chapters and five hundred and eighty-three pages.

Horgan is evidently an *in extenso* author, courageous in handling a big canvas. Had he started with the composer's childhood and proceeded head on, instead of taking his standpoint in the present and then backing up into the past, he might have lost himself in an American "Jean Christophe." As it is the spectacle of life

arrests him, and his typewriter champs to record its fascinating details. Thus we come upon episodes here, like Maggie's past love affair, minutely and ably chronicled but not wholly germane to the plot. Some of them have been recently printed as short stories in *Harper's* and good reading they make.

A talented young writer must follow his own path: if he is more of the school of Lewis, Bromfield, or Dreiser than of Hemingway, or Wilder, so it is and will be. Nevertheless, the great comedians of the world have learned brevity and abridgment in dealing with the trivial people who are their normal prey. One never spends too much time with Sir Willoughby Patterne, or with Le Misanthrope. In life we could avoid Georgia if she came our way at an Indian dance with her fussy lunchbaskets and her terrible cohorts. In the book we are at her mercy.

Mad Adventure

THE AFRICAN QUEEN. By C. S. Forester. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

HERE is a book which may not be high art but is certainly good entertainment. It is a rousing tale of adventure, implausible, perhaps, in its incidents but convincing in its portrayal of them. Mr. Forester very likely has never seen Central Africa, and knows of the River Uganda merely by hearsay, but he can create an atmosphere that is what the fiction lover demands of an African tale, and having forced the reader to make the initial hurdle can persuade him of the inevitability of his episodes. Moreover, he has sufficient skill in characterization, sufficient psychological subtlety, to lift his story above the general run of adventure yarns, and enlist interest in his hero and heroine as personalities and not mere lay figures on which to hang excitement.

The cast of Mr. Forester's story, except for the brief moment in the beginning in which the English missionary dies a victim to his exertions and tropical fever, and the even more fleeting glimpse of the German commander gazing out over the river from his fortifications above it, consists of but two persons, the drab, elderly, conventionally raised English spinster and the little cockney engineer who, against his will and his judgment, lends himself to her mad adventure. In a rickety launch, with torpedoes manufactured from ends of pipe filled with blasting glycerine, they defy the menace of the German concentration of troops in Central Africa, and make their way down the Uganda River, shooting the rapids on their course, to the lake where rides the *Königin Louise*, representative and emblem of the German navy in the year 1914. Mr. Forester has focussed his interest not so much on the hazards of the journey, though they furnish absorbing reading, but on the relations between the woman whose single-track mind sees in the blowing up of the German ship the means of doing her bit for her country and the mean-spirited little man who, forced out of his cowardliness by her determination, grows in spiritual stature through love and danger. Here is a genuinely skilful psychological study, one in which the evolution of a love at first blush absurd is made to seem natural and logical. Mr. Forester is consistent and incisive in his unfolding of the small incidents which bring about the incongruous love affair, and artist enough to conclude his story without bombast or compromise. It is an absorbing tale with personalities and events that remain fixed in memory.

Three Tellers of Tales

A YOUNG MAN IN A HURRY. By T. O. Beachcroft. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1935. \$2.50.

AUNT MARGOT. By Doris Peel. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1935. \$2.

THE LITTLE WIFE. By William March. New York: Smith & Haas. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

OF the three books before me I agree perforce with the publishers of the first mentioned that its author is a discovery. This young Englishman who was, it seems, something of an athlete at college, who has chosen the short story as a medium because you can write them quickly, and says that most of his were literally written on the tops of London buses, presents us with a greater variety of conceptions, and some of those of a more telling character, than do either our own American writer, William March, or Mr. Beachcroft's countrywoman, Miss Doris Peel.

I am going to say a measured thing, I am going to say that I think the last story

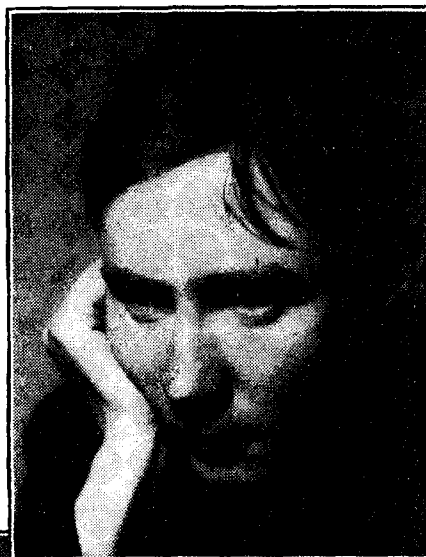
in "The Inn on the Estuary," one deeply knowledgeable concerning what in England are known as "the lower classes," and incidentally in some descriptions an intensely poetic observer of nature. Here are fourteen stories all of which can be read and reread for their natural, unlabored style and the fine intelligence concerning human beings that lives in them all. I hope this writer may give us many more books. He makes much of the best story writing of the day seem insignificant in the true sense of the word, his instinct for proper structure being what it is.

I was impressed by Mr. March's former volume, "Company K." Now he offers us a volume of exactly the same number of

short stories as is presented by Mr. Beachcroft. William March, to my mind, does not possess the ability of another contemporary American writer, George Milburn, in the short story; but his title tale, which has already been anthologized, is an original psychological presentation. His two war stories have authenticity, one in ironical comedy, the other in slow, cumulative tragedy. But in a story such as "He Sits There All Day

Long," I may be wrong but I feel that he spills over just a bit, and another, "The Pattern that Gulls Weave," does not seem to "come off." Neither, in my opinion, does the semi-mystical, "This Heavy Load," and the miracle in "Mist on the Meadow" leaves me dubious, though I admire much in the story. There is impressive reality for me, however, in "George and Charlie"; and if "Happy Jack" seems to me overwritten, on the other hand "Woolen Drawers" in its pitiful irony is quite gorgeous. Perhaps best of all the ironies is "Miss Daisy," the revelation of what was really in the heart and mind of a crippled woman who passed as a saint, told through the apprehension of a child. Mr. Marsh is always an interesting writer, and his Southern town of Reedyville is as real, with its various inhabitants, as Mr. Beachcroft's English Edgerly. Both writers know their own regions and the local peculiarities thereof.

One thing only has marred my enjoyment of Miss Doris Peel's more slender but indubitably fine talent, and that is that I feel upon it a visitation from Katherine Mansfield. It is an unconscious influence. Miss Peel is at her best in her stories of little girls. Yet one recalls several of Miss Mansfield's stories wherein things are seen through the eyes of children that were positive masterpieces. Still, Miss Peel's own talent is decidedly one to reckon with. The anguish that children can suffer over some loathed article of apparel imposed upon them by their parents, or the first snobbishness in which they deeply dread their comrades' criticism of the details of their own homes, are well understood of Miss Peel and saliently presented. "Afternoon with Lynette" is a wholly delightful story, in which a little girl of parents who are obviously of the *intelligentsia* escapes on an excursion of her own into the life of ordinary children and has some hours of delirious ecstasy. "Aunt Margot" is also a notable story, and "The Wives" again brings the acute but puzzled vision of the child to bear on unhappy adult matters. There are only ten of these stories; the ones purely about adults seem to me less fresh and original than the others, though "Ice-Drome" has an original setting. I should, at all events, have been sorry not to have read Miss Peel's volume. Her mind is sensitive and subtle, and her writing is deft. One hopes her next volume will be quite free of unconscious influence.



T. O. BEACHCROFT



DORIS PEEL

Photo by Doris Ullman
in Mr. Beachcroft's book is one that Rudyard Kipling would have been proud to sign in the days when his fame was in the making; and whatever you may think of Kipling's political or sociological views, anyone who doesn't know that he is one of the world's truly great short story writers is—I was about to say a congenital idiot! "Iodide in Hut C.4" has



WILLIAM MARCH

everything that a story somewhat involving the technical, and dealing with a peculiar and dangerous calling, should have. On the human side it is deeply ironical in a masterly fashion. I should call it top in the book. But there are other stories quite as engrossing. And Mr. Beachcroft possesses an extraordinary range of information. When he writes of butterflies or of army knots or of a fatal disease or of high explosives he writes as an expert. That kind of thing was the Kipling gift. It is not so extraordinary that he should be able vividly to describe the progress of a track event in "The Half-Mile," since he himself has won prizes for running as well as boxing. And the range of this book gives one furiously to hope for his talent. He is a realist who can also present true pathos, a successful humorist, as in "The Fire at the Colonel's," an artist in the macabre, as