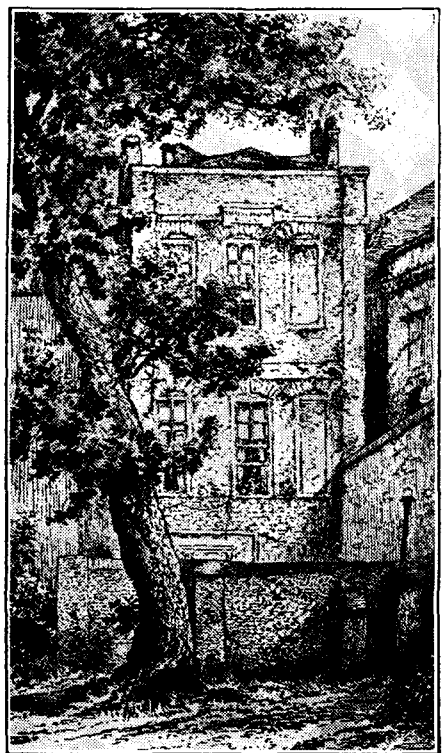


work and which are commonly regarded as peculiar to that mode of writing. But these qualities got him nowhere as far as the public ear was concerned. The day of personal pamphleteering was evidently over. Without the authority of some recognized organ of opinion it was all but impossible to win an audience. The *Edinburgh Review* had transformed the shape of periodical journalism. By allowing a far greater latitude in the expression of opinion and by a policy of liberal remuneration it had removed itself to a safe distance from Grub Street, enlisting an order of writers who had refused to defile themselves by contact with its predecessors of the eighteenth century. Weekly journalism was affected by a similar ambition. Leigh Hunt and his brother founded *The Examiner* with the avowed aim of imparting a literary flavor to the discussion of political and social questions, and so created the prototype of the weeklies with which we are now so familiar. The miscellaneous "magazines" were not far behind in adapting themselves to the new models, and even the daily newspapers became infected with the spirit. This was the remarkable efflorescence witnessed in the second decade of the last century. Instead of looking for serviceable hacks, editors now vied with one another in searching for original, provocative writers, who commanded a vivid pen and could captivate readers.

The situation was exactly suited to Hazlitt's circumstances. The powers which he had lavished on fruitless philosophical speculation and on political criticisms, and which, not having the predilections of a scholar, he was not likely to exercise in any systematic form, needed for their true effect a medium somewhat resembling familiar conversation. Hazlitt was passionately fond of talk and has left us in some of his essays and in his book on Northcote conversations Boswell-like in their fidelity. Moreover, the versatility of his talents and interests gave him an enormous advantage. How many news-



MILTON'S HOME IN WESTMINSTER
in which Hazlitt lived for some years.

odical press, the generation of Francis Jeffrey and Sidney Smith, of Southey and DeQuincey, of William Cobbett and Leigh Hunt and Christopher North, all of them in their day at least as conspicuous as Hazlitt, whose work preserves a vitality at all comparable to his?

The secret of his enduring appeal has been suggested by Hazlitt himself: "I think what I please and say what I think." Masculine thought when it is fused with glowing passion and expressed with uncompromising honesty is in itself a fair passport to posterity. The fame which Hazlitt courted was that "of a Pascal, a Leibnitz, or a Berkeley," and though it is not with that order of minds that he can

properly be ranked, he was guilty of no arrogance when he said that he, too, had been a thinker. He earned the title by prolonged and intense concentration on every subject within the wide range of his interests. He never sat down to write anything without saying something of his own. He was often charged with a conscious striving after originality and brilliance. He answered, like his friend Lamb, that it was better than striving after dullness. Doubtless his avoidance of the banal and commonplace was deliberate. He justified it on principle:

I was chiefly anxious that the germ of thought should be true and original; that I should put others in possession of what I meant, and then left it to find its level in the operation of common sense, and to have its excesses corrected by other causes.

He was not only a conscientious thinker, he was also a stubborn thinker. The remarkable tenacity with which he clung to his early convictions may be viewed as a sign of arrested growth or as proof of indomitable integrity. That he was free from prejudice he would have been the last person to pretend. But he might have argued that the line which separates prejudice from principle is barely visible to the critical eye. And was it not the saving grace of his own prejudices that he was at all times conscious of them? That is why he was able to pierce through the mists of personal dislike and to be surprisingly just to the intellectual and literary powers of men whose characters or principles he detested. To be sure he once ruefully repented of having "in a fit of extravagant candor" done justice to Burke (from whom he had learned to attach a philosophical value to prejudice), and of having betrayed a cause by praising an enemy. But as a general thing the moments of partisan rancor are mitigated by a spirit of fair play. His dislike of the schematic utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and his strong sense of the spiritual limitations of that social philosopher did not blind him, as they did Coleridge, to the value of the latter's work. He was repelled by the dogmatism of Godwin, who did not allow enough for human weakness, and he was indignant at the pessimism of Malthus, who made too much capital out of human weakness, but in the end he accorded a measure of justice to both men and made good his claim to intellectual honesty.

Consistency is not regarded as one of the major virtues in a thinking man. We no longer censure Wordsworth and Coleridge for changing their political opinions. We place a higher value on mental flexibility and aptitude for growth. These are not attributes which we associate with Hazlitt. But the implication that his lifelong adherence to early ideas was a symptom of wilful obstinacy or of an incapacity to learn from experience is quite unfair. It fails to take into account the nature and quality of these ideas and their relation to the movement of events in his time. The fact is that Hazlitt was surprisingly precocious in maturing his judgments and in attaining his intellectual balance. At the impressionable age of fifteen or sixteen, when all sorts of dazzling hopes for the rebirth of society were beguiling the idealistic youth of Europe, in the very years when the much older and more experienced Wordsworth had yielded to the blandishments of Godwinian anarchy, Hazlitt was painfully and systematically working out an argument on the limits of an individual's freedom in an orderly society. Sensitive as he was to the prevailing currents of revolutionary doctrine, fervently as he believed in and desired a renovation of the foundations of government, he held his sympathies and his wishes critically and sanely in check. Always a radical, he never associated himself with any party or committed himself to any shibboleth or fixed program of reform. He was as far as possible from the narrowness of the doctrinaire or fanatic. He swore loyalty only to the basic and vital principles of liberty and humanity. In the steadfastness with which he adhered to these articles of his faith there is something of the heroic. With bitterness he saw the work of the Revolution apparently overthrown and



WILLIAM HAZLITT

From the charcoal drawing by Bewick.

the detested Bourbons restored to power. But he prophesied that Frenchmen would repent of the Restoration, and he lived just long enough to see the royal family expelled for a second time. In his own generation he was vindicated.

We know to what an assault the principles which he espoused are being subjected at the present time. Other gods than his have established themselves in large portions of the once civilized world. But it is not at all clear that his battle has been lost. His language is still intelligible to many who continue to put a value on the freedom of the human spirit, and perhaps comes home to them with a greater thrill than it had for his contemporaries. More than ever the world now needs the conviction that there is such a thing as an impartial reason and an enlightened intelligence capable of guiding the behavior of the multitude. Mr. Harold Nicolson recently observed that for immediate, as distinct from ultimate, purposes, the world needs more of the kind of common sense and judgment as any other class of the community and that their judgment would not be improved by being altogether denied its exercise.

It is an absurdity [he declares] to suppose that there can be any better criterion of natural grievances, or the proper remedies for them, than the aggregate amount of actual, dear-bought experience, the honest feelings and heartfelt wishes of a whole people, informed and directed by the greatest power of understanding in the community, unbiased by any sinister motive.

That is not only stating the case for democracy but defining the issue between a free and a servile existence. This is the issue that is now engrossing the attention of men, perplexing the heads of many, and filling their hearts with anxiety. Those who need a strengthening of their faith in the possibility of preserving or even enlarging the sphere of human freedom will find a tonic in the writings of William Hazlitt. They will find in him something more than a defense of political equality as a good in itself. It was his intense realization of the scope for happiness afforded by life that made the freedom to enjoy it seem so desirable to him. The rights of man were to him no abstract principle but a passionate feeling, a feeling that still glows through the distance of a hundred years.

With the issuance of the final volumes of this edition the collection of Hazlitt is really complete, being the result of a thorough search of all the periodicals to which he is at all likely to have contributed. It incorporates not only the *Life of Napoleon* and those articles first identified by Mr. Howe and issued by him in the two volumes of "New Writings," but a quantity of other scattered matter previously known to be by Hazlitt, and a number of essays, including a few of high value, which are here attributed to him for the first time. The recovery from the *Edinburgh Review* of the article on "Capital Punishments" (vol. 19), along with a number of discussions of economic subjects from other sources, cannot but im-

press all students of Hazlitt, and will doubtless add a cubit to his stature as a thinker on social problems. To make sure of the completeness of his harvest the editor has placed among the notes whatever portions of his original newspaper and magazine articles were omitted or altered by Hazlitt when he put them into books. There can be very little remaining for future gleaners.

Mr. Howe frequently gives us a fresh text, relying on the last form in which an essay left Hazlitt's hand and utilizing to this end a considerable body of manuscript material unknown to or neglected by former editors. He is enabled in the process to provide a new set of identifications for the characters indicated by misleading initials in the famous essay, "Of Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen." His minute study of the bibliography of Hazlitt and of everything relating to the life and personality of the writer results in increasing and correcting the already very full knowledge of the subject contained in his own authoritative biography. What Mr. Howe has done is now done for good and all, and the writings of Hazlitt will hereafter have to be studied in the form this edition gives them.

Jacob Zeitlin, professor of English at the University of Illinois, is the leading Hazlitt authority in America, and the author of the recently published translation of *Montaigne*.

For This Have Poets Died

By MARY GOULD OGLIVIE

“O do not think any more,
Who have pondered too long,”
(A voice may have said)
“These grey convolvular folds of thy mind
Are an accordion playing stale tunes,
Bundle it up for the dust and the moth,
Fling it aside,
Its tones insufficient.”

Education sweep on with the stream;
Resist not
The great cool flood of the water's
Omnipotence.”

Upon the grey magnitudinous beach
Of the silence that lies under sound,
She emerged, the body and being of youth,
(Who can gainsay it?)
Pressing the sand with sensitive feet,
Lifting fingertips to still winds,
Her face to new suns;
Here poised the music that long had
evaded,
Bemused in this silence,
Enmeshed in its veillings.

She held it perhaps,
The still voice that she captured,
Cupped in wet palm,
Feeling its whispering tremors,
Seeing the beating cry of its colors;
But she released it,
Curious ("yet must thou penetrate")
To hear the soundless pæan of its raptures,
The ecstasy of its darting
Voluptuous circlings.

Did she hear it then, the first
Thread-drawn silver note
Of the sound under silence?
Was it beat, or breath, or less
Than breath of dust?
Through what strange valleys,
Misted and winding,
Swiftly convergent,
Did she pursue it?

We shall be long in knowing.

For those who tap that vein
At rhythm's source must die
And live, and die again,
To be buried in a new earth
(The granuled dust of all accomplishment);
Only they with body dissolved
For beauty's sake,
And spirit concentrate,
Shall hear
The unborn music of the seed,
Shall share
The marching melody of clod,
Shall bend before
The wailing passion of the dust.

The Mystical Value of Art

EXPRESSIONISM IN ART. By Sheldon Cheney. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation. 1934. \$5.

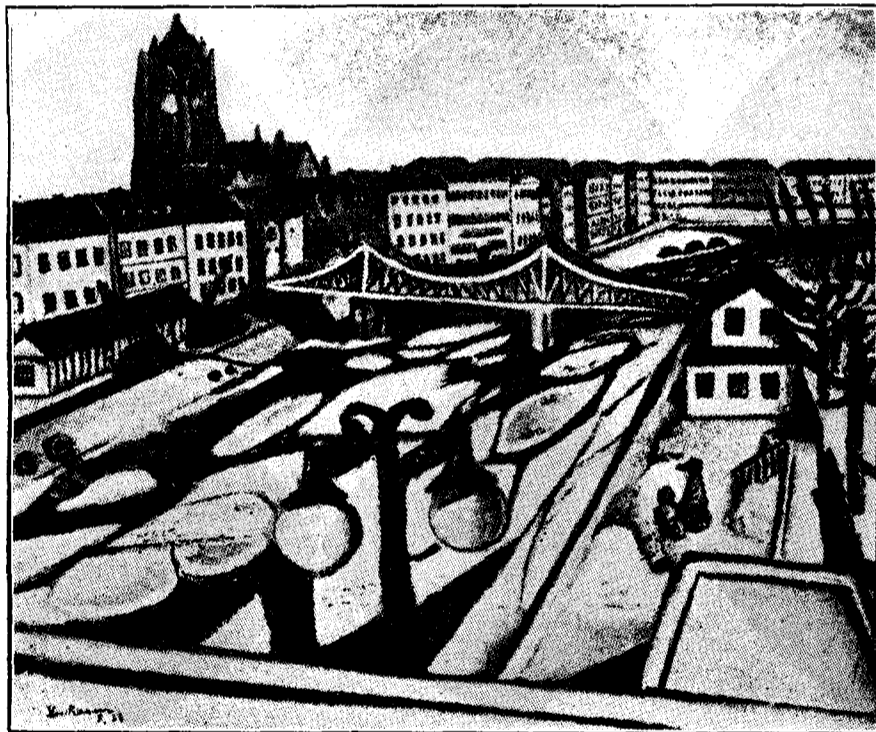
Reviewed by VIRGIL BARKER

AS Mr. Cheney himself notes, controversy over the art "movements" of the past quarter-century is being supplanted by discussion; in his own "Primer of Modern Art" he felt compelled to exhort and rebuke the unconverted, but he now feels more free to seek for some positive and unified achievement. Mr. Cheney has not written that balanced summation of a period which can be best composed after it is all over; his condemnation of the nearer past is still too indiscriminate in character, if less acrimonious in tone, and his enthusiasm permits him to overrate the work of his chosen expressionists. But he has written a helpful interpretation of twentieth-century experimentalism as not alone a rebellion against restrictions but in addition a return to vital sources of tradition. He defines his terms, avoids pontification, and does his best to escape the taint of system-making.

Very importantly his book differs from the other attempts of the past year or so to cover the same ground in its recognition of the mystical nature of art—for creator and appreciator alike. Where other books are intellectualist all through, this one is so only in the language by which it attempts to describe a non-intellectualist core of experience. Touching at the close upon other arts but dealing mainly with painting, its five central

rate simplification makes all the more deplorable what may prove to be a still more influential mistake: the choice of "realism" for the label inclusive of all that is antagonistic to expressionism. The former is too valuable a word to be wasted on unintelligent academicism and the mere imitation of appearances. Correctly elaborated, that word could be made to designate the fundamentally life-communicating quality of all great art. The thing for which it properly stands is an affair of depth and intensity of perception. Cézanne himself seems to have had this sort of thing in mind when he talked of "realizing"; and at least some of Mr. Cheney's mystic form-seekers could be truly praised as realists of spiritual exploration. But, of course, if a reviewer desires to rectify another's book to this sweeping extent, he should write his own book against the field; and this reviewer regretfully acknowledges Mr. Cheney's right to his own definitions.

Any book on expressionism designed for the layman requires particular care in illustration. The numerous examples here given, especially from the ancestors of the movement, do much to make the book serviceable to art in general. But they are too often blurred by being reproduced from other illustrations and too often printed overly black—both defects which work special injustice to the most typical expressionistic works. They are likely to confuse those who have not yet learned the imaginative translation of mere black-and-whites into the medium of colored pigment.



ICE FLOES. By Max Beckmann. (Courtesy of J. B. Neumann.)
Reproduced from "Expressionism in Art."

chapters deal with "picture-building." Here the emphasis is rightly upon the fluidity of the creative process, which can only be falsified by any set of rigid labels or a determinate succession of mental states, and upon the "energetics," or tension between form and form, of the resulting work. Unavoidably the language here becomes not easily understandable by the reader in a hurry; but, taken as tentatively as it is offered, it can profit the thoughtful layman.

Mr. Cheney wisely says that "... today perhaps no terminology is good outside the volume in which it is used." But any book as good as this is bound to start ripples and waves of critical verbalisms. One of these, if it becomes generally adopted, will prove a decided gain over current confusion: the substitution, for the many sectarian words ending in "ism" and for the inexact "modernism," of "expressionism." Mr. Cheney backs his choice by good authority, by a certain degree of established usage, and by sound argument. For him it covers all the recent radicalisms except futurism and surrealism; and to this reviewer the word appears adequate to them also as concerns their intent. This move in the direction of accu-

Exterminator of Humbugs

PASSING JUDGMENTS. By George Jean Nathan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by RANDOLPH BARTLETT

OF all the productions of the American theatre, the most diverting and not the least important is George Jean Nathan. Only the ocular proof of his existence refutes the suspicion that he was invented by the theatre managers to make their activities seem worthy of intelligent consideration.

Of all subjects upon which writing fellows bestow their attention, there is none over which such a vast flood of perpetual pish-posh is poured. The obvious reason is there is so little in the theatre of today to inspire real literary effort, that the astute and highly paid gentlemen of the press protect their jobs by engaging in personal exhibitionism, which is usually more diverting than the nominal subject itself.

Yet here at hand is the twentieth Nathan book in about as many years,



GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

nearly all devoted to essays bearing more or less directly on the stage. Everybody knows there is not that much to be said about the theatre, that is worth saying. There is hardly a subject in the world which cannot be exhausted in a fraction of this space. The explanation is that a good deal of the time, Nathan is not actually writing about the theatre at all. What starts out as a discussion of the shapeliness of the girls in the latest revue is just as likely as not to amble off into an analysis of the influence of the polyphonic art of the Spanish vihuelistas upon the compositions of Bach, or to an exposition of the incapacity of the French for self-government.

"Passing Judgments" is that kind of book. Nimble skipping from low and raffish humor to scholarly analysis, it is a literary vaudeville for persons of catholic taste. Nathan never tries to deceive either himself or his reader as to the intrinsic value of the theatre. His attitude toward it is that of the fond father of an idiot child, deformed and vicious, who refuses to send it to an institution because it once uttered a sound that was vaguely recognizable as "Daddy."

Let the theatre display the least symptom of intelligence, either in acting or writing, or even in management, and Nathan yanks out all the stops of his organ and blares a Marche Triomphale, fortissimo. The next moment he may be thwacking even his friend Eugene O'Neill, but his glee in discovering something he can praise is almost pathetic. He is anxious to like the theatre, but not to the point of sacrificing his intellectual integrity.

The one thing he seems to hate is humbug. The sure thrust with which he strikes to the heart of bombast and pretence is equalled only by the best matadors. One of the finest performances he has ever given in this respect is the six pages in "Passing Judgments" in which he deftly disposes of Gertrude Stein's theory of verbal sound and rhythm.

While the more spectacular flights of Nathan's criticism are his excoriations of bad management, bad writing, and bad acting in the theatre, he is not a pessimist concerning the institution. "The American Theatre of Today" is the title of a chapter in which he has nothing but praise and encouragement for the experimental producers. "The new American theatre," he says, "with all its ambitions and hopes, may true enough, for all its great step forward, be still far from the top of the celestial ladder, but it is climbing hard, and steadily, and unmistakably."

It is true that Nathan's ambitions for the theatre are much higher than the ambitions of the theatre for itself. Max Beerbohm, in one of his neatest essays, has explained why theatrical criticism inevitably arouses resentment. But it would be well for managers, actors, and playwrights to remember that Nathan has been studying their medium for twenty-five years, and to think of him as a friend instead of regarding him much as the Southern negro does the Ku Klux Klan. Still, most people are pretty human, and in view of the razor edge of Nathan's style, it is not surprising that the stage folk say:

You might have been right to disseminate your love,
But why did you kick me downstairs?

No Blurbs Needed

WEBSTER'S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY, SECOND EDITION UNABRIDGED. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam. 1934. \$20.

EVEN though the blurbs (a colloquialism adequately defined in this new dictionary) on the dust cover, such as "the most notable publishing event of the century," and "the greatest single volume ever published" give pause, a general survey of this highly important work produces a most favorable impression. Edited under the general supervision of President Neilson of Smith and an extensive and highly expert corps of assistants and advisers, the book seems adequate to every demand that is likely to be made upon it by all except the most-specialized scholars. It is particularly rich in new technical terms.

This second edition is a revision of the edition of 1909. As the general editor says in his introduction:

Such a revision is far from being a mere supplementing by addition. The constituting of the vocabulary of the present volume has been a highly selective process in which the problem of discarding was second only to that of adding. Space has had to be found for so much that is new that the pages have had to be disencumbered of much that has become comparatively useless or obsolete. Yet, since the older literature will still be read, mere obsolescence is no criterion. Many discontinued scientific terms may fairly be regarded as dead and may safely be omitted, but obsolete words in literature call for explanation as much as ever. In the decisions which have had to be made on such questions, no simple rule of thumb like the fixing of a date after which a word ceases to appear will suffice; much depends on who among older writers has used it. In general, words which had become obsolete before 1500 have been omitted, but the whole vocabulary of Chaucer has been retained. Occasional disappointment is inevitable, but when it came to a choice between a word used last by an obscure writer of the sixteenth century and an essential term in aviation, it seemed clear that the greater usefulness was to be obtained by explaining the latter. It is obvious that such judgments cannot be absolute; the editors have sought by consultation and accumulation of instances to reduce to a minimum the personal and capricious.

Thus scope and balance are both guaranteed and seem to be present.

Particularly valuable features in the numerous appendices are the synopsis of words differently pronounced by different orthoepists, and the pronouncing biographical dictionary which has been brought up to date with special reference to new American data. Webster's Unabridged is so familiar that it is not necessary in this brief note to go into further description, except to say that the work as a whole shows the results of a most complete and intelligent overhauling and expansion.

Marie Antoinette

THE MERRY QUEEN. A Historical Narrative of the Happy and Tragic Life of Marie Antoinette. By Pierre Nezelof. Liveright. 1934. \$2.50.

THIS book purports to be biography. In reality it is fiction of the most florid variety. The publisher's challenge for it a comparison with Zweig's treatment of the same material, but such a comparison would be quite fruitless. Here we have the story of Marie Antoinette told with an intimacy of detail that is wholly bewildering—the flighty and lazy Archduchess distressing her tutors and calling down upon herself the lengthy maternal advice of the severe Maria Theresa; the mad, reckless gayety of a Versailles that brooked no restraints, not even financial ones; amazing conversations of King with Queen on the most delicate of marital subjects; and finally, done with a technique that ought to arouse the jealousy of Hollywood and send tittering shopgirls into ecstasies, scenes of passionate love-making between the Queen and the Count Axel de Fersen. From the historian's point of view the book is worthless. Admirers of glib romances, however, should find it attractive for its facile inventions and its giddy interpretation of "the Austrian" as a quixotic madcap, surrendering to one vital love.