

ditions so tragically disclosed, Lee saw but one major policy the government could employ. That was the vigorous enforcement of the conscription act." Such has ever been the cry of the military spendthrift, and even in the narrowest military sense its wisdom was dubious. For, some pages later, Dr. Freeman remarks that "while conscripts were not arriving in sufficient quotas to strengthen the army materially . . . enough of them were being sent in to impair the morale."

Dr. Freeman also tells us of Lee's care "to prevent the wastage of the troops he had" by strict administration; of his "great vigilance in declining to issue furloughs," even in the case of war-worn troops; of his refusal to release men "because their families had need of them, or because there were many brothers of the same family in the army." The maintenance of the country's food supply had to take second place to the maintenance of the blood supply for the ranks of the army. The question remains whether his strategy was in accord with this care to prevent wastage in comparatively trifling ways.

The answer, a negative answer, is suggested by an incidental statement in Dr. Freeman's glowing summary in the chapter entitled "The Sword of Robert E. Lee." That statement runs:

During the twenty-four months when he had been free to employ open manoeuvre . . . he had sustained approximately 103,000 casualties and had inflicted 143,000. *Holding, as he usually had, to the offensive, his combat losses had been greater in proportion to his numbers than those of the Federals, but he had demonstrated how strategy may increase an opponent's casualties, for his losses included only 10,000 prisoners, whereas he had taken 38,000.*

The italics are mine. While the ratio of prisoners was certainly a tribute to his military artistry, the ratio of casualties in general spelt bankruptcy to his country. Its chief soldier, if a true grand strategist, should surely have kept sight of such calculations in framing his military strategy. The unqualified praise which has been given to Lee by so many eminent soldiers is the strongest support for the ironical saying that modern war is "too serious a business to be left to soldiers."

We are left with the reflection that "The Sword of Robert E. Lee" is an all too appropriate title. For all his brilliance of manoeuvre, Lee seems to have had no clear grasp of the basic tactical conditions upon which strategy depended. Had it been possible to epitomize his generalship with such a title as "The Bullet of Robert E. Lee," the story of the Civil War might have a different ending. As it is, the South is left with a heroic dream—topped by the figure of a great artist of war who was also a good man, a man for whom other men died willingly even when they died needlessly. That dream is worthily perpetuated in this monumental biography.

Psychiatry in Verse

SIX SIDES TO A MAN. By Merrill Moore. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1935. \$2.

Reviewed by DUDLEY FITTS

WHEN "The Noise that Time Makes" appeared five years ago, Dr. Moore and his very personal version of the sonnet-form were discoveries, and it seemed necessary to write apologetically, perhaps a little patronizingly, about them. Dr. Moore's point of view was strange, or seemed strange at that time, with the strangeness of the point of view of any man who sets down, with an immediacy permitting neither revision nor discrimination, exactly what he thinks about things. His sonnet-form was described as the disintegration of the established form, a kind of pleasant eccentricity with only an eccentricity's interest. The book delighted me; but I am ashamed to say that I too wrote about it in this way. For with the appearance of "Six Sides to a Man," there can no longer be any question (except, apparently, in the mind of Mr. Louis Untermeyer, who contributes a quaint epilogue to this book) of apologizing for Dr. Moore, of "interpreting" him, of treating him, in short, as though he were an amazing child who was for some reason taken up by the Nashville Fugitives, and who has since been amusing himself by wilfully breaking up the pretty plaything-sonnets in his nursery. It becomes clear that what looked like a disintegration of the sonnet-form was really not disintegration at all (in the sense that some of Cummings's fine sonnets represent disintegration), but a considered alteration and loosening of the structure. Eccentricities of rhyming and lineation are not gratuitous here: they are necessitated by the poet's precipitate, yet curiously ordered, way of thinking and expression. They are never so extreme that the reader is allowed to lose the sense of the underlying form; and it is the urgent clash between this form and the superficial variations—precisely like the clash between metre and cadence in all good verse—that makes the best of these sonnets memorably exciting, and that saves even the worst of them from commonplaceness.

"Six Sides to a Man" ("Seeing," "Hearing," "Smelling," "Tasting," "Feeling," "Knowing") is a psychoanalytical treatise in sonnet-form. The range of the book is immense, yet the poems have a curious coherence. Some of them—some of the most moving—are as artlessly objective as pages torn from a psychiatrist's case-book: which, I suppose, is precisely what they are. Others are as subjective and as contemplative as the most reactionary of sweete-slyding poetry-fanciers could wish. Still others are dream-poems, as obscure in their private symbolism as any *surréalisme* could be, and often distract-

ingly beautiful when they are most unintelligible. My feeling is that Dr. Moore is most successful when he seems least concerned with writing poetry: in certain unforgettable case-histories, for instance,—like "Andrew MacClintock," or "Daring Cousin Killed in an Air-Crash,"—and in deceptively simple statements of fact. This manner is perilous: it frequently allows Dr. Moore to perpetrate such verses as

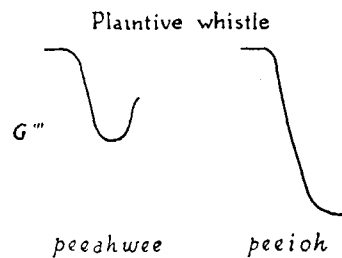
*Time has castrated Grandpa; his endocrines
Are of no more use than his vas deferens—,*

which I find very hard to forgive, let alone forget. But at its best, this cold, hard poetry of perception, apparently so casual, actually so many-surfaced, has the depth of meaning, the universal tenderness, the clean irony, that characterize the philosopher and the fine poet.

Identifying Birds

A GUIDE TO BIRD SONGS. By Aretas A. Saunders. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1935. \$2.50.

THIS excellent little manual is a successful attempt to write down bird songs by a method of notation comprehensible to the many bird lovers who have not sufficient musical training to follow the note and bar system of previous books, which indeed, since birds do not sing like man, is usually inaccurate. This simple but elaborate scheme provides for the quarter notes and the irregularity of rhythm not easily recorded by our musical scales. His method, which is partly phonetic, partly graphic, records time, pitch, and loudness in a simple fashion easily used in the field. Each note of the song is represented by a separate line, the pitch being the direction of the curve. The book begins with a careful key, in which the terms and curves are all explained. Trills, slurs, changes in quality, recurring consonant sounds are all recordable, in a double device of curves, and words or letters, which cover the surprising variety not only among bird songs, but among birds of the same species. Here is the fa-



miliar song of the wood pewee, G''' indicating a point of reference for the pitch. "Each one-half inch of horizontal length of a record represents one second of time, and each one-eighth inch of vertical height represents a half-tone in pitch."

The Middle Class Under Capitalism

CAPITALISM CARRIES ON. By Walter B. Pitkin. New York: Whittlesey House. 1935. \$1.75.

Reviewed by ERNEST G. DRAPER

FROM the sea of volumes on economic subjects that has almost submerged us in the last three years, I vote for this book. It strikes pay dirt from beginning to end. Fresh and arresting ideas flash from the mind of Professor Pitkin like sparks from an emery wheel. Sometimes they flash too fast. Even so, mental indigestion is preferable to the literary sawdust that has been served up to us by various so-called classical economists in the past.

Professor Pitkin explores a thousand bypaths as he goes along. His main theme, however, is direct and clear. It is that the salvation of capitalism rests with the middle class. Who comprise this class?

About one American out of every ten, at the most conservative estimate. Not more than one in seven, on the most liberal estimate. Let us say between twelve and eighteen millions. . . .

In this group we find, at the top, men and women of genius but not of immense wealth. Just below them come people of high ability in science, technology, management, and the arts. Then comes another, much larger sub-group of professional men and women, highly skilled workers in fields requiring considerable mathematics or other analytical ability. Add to all these their children, and you have the American Middle Class.

What has happened to this class in the last five years? "The middle-class man is being ground exceeding fine between the upper millstone of Ceresus and the nether millstone of Cyclops. . . .

Who were the first to rush to Washington for cash relief? The bankers. Then the railroads. And in their train a score of other major interests, each with a flying squad of lobbyists and ladies. The government gave its millions, then its billions. Then it turned to the next arrivals. And who were they? The starving, the sick, the park-bench sleepers, the wild boys, and all the other hapless wretches without food. . . .

Virtually every dollar of the tens of billions allotted to the powerful rich and the powerful poor! Scarcely a dime given to middle-class folk! But strange to say, it is these same middle-class folk who are now being asked to pay most of the relief bills. Who else could pay them? Will they acquiesce? Should they? . . .

They should not if they follow the advice of certain short-sighted capitalist leaders. On the other hand, Professor Pitkin's argument implies a situation that was not so clear cut as he describes. In citing "the bankers" and "the railroads" as among the first beneficiaries of the Government, he omits to point out the fact that the Government by giving aid to these private agencies was in reality extending a much greater aid to hundreds of thousands of middle-class investors and savings bank depositors. Of course, the point remains, however, that in spite of this valuable assistance, thousands of banks did fail and only a portion of the savings of the middle-class depositors was salvaged.

Then follows an illuminating discussion of how best to retain the loyal support of the middle class. It all boils down to a brief statement of minimum requirements which conclude the book.

Capitalism will carry on smoothly if it shows at least as clear a grasp of realities as the capitalists of fifty years ago exhibited.

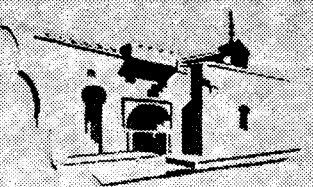
It will attain this clarity only if it retains both the loyalty and the services of the middle class.

It will retain both only if it abolishes fear of ruin and old-age poverty from middle-class minds.

While this running comment suggests the essence of the main theme, it does not do justice to the wealth of provocative ideas and new slants of thought which saturate these pages. A minor flaw is the author's style. In his desire to make this style appeal to the general public, he resorts, in places, to rather amateurish wise-cracking. This frequent use of high school cheer leader diction is doubly unfortunate in that it tends to cloud a thread of argument that is both vivid and profound. However, such criticism is trivial compared to the worth of the book as a whole. We need this type of stimulation if we wish to help in steering the ship of liberal-minded capitalism between the shoals of Huey Long and Father Coughlin on the one hand and the rocks of "obsolescent capitalists" on the other.

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By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

ROUND ABOUT PARNASSUS

HERE come days in the life of a reviewer of contemporary verse when the multiplicity of small volumes neither extraordinarily good nor to be discarded without comment balks the critical faculty. What is to be done about them all? A good many of them sound quite alike, and yet the technical proficiency of all is large enough (though not very large) to warrant mention. Today I have a few books upon which I should like particularly to write, and a good many others that I should say something about. Recent volumes like *Horace Gregory's* "Chorus for Survival" and *Leonard Bacon's* "The Voyage of Autoleon" merit—and are to have—separate reviews by other hands. But I have before me as varied a group as "Selected Poems of Marianne Moore," *Conrad Aiken's* "Landscape West of Eden," *MacKinlay Kantor's* "Turkey in the Straw," and a quite remarkable first book of poems brought to my attention by *Robert Nathan*. But I intend today to let the last be first, and before I take up the books mentioned I shall comment briefly upon a few others.

In the first place I owe an apology to *Norman MacLeod*. Owing to untoward circumstance his book, "Horizons of Death," was for some time mislaid in this office and I finally gave it up as lost. I asked Mr. MacLeod to bring me another copy, and he did indeed come in to see me, but had no other copy available. Then just recently the book turned up from where it had been mislaid under a pile of other books. It was an inscribed copy and I am glad to record its finding. It was published by Parnassus Press at 11 Barrow Street, this city. Mr. MacLeod has contributed to a number of magazines and has been connected with *The New Masses*. His poetry has freshness, vigor, and range, and is written out of his own experience. There is nothing concocted about it. It is "dedicated to a bitter age." What it seems to me chiefly to lack are rhythm and cerebration; two opposite necessities, you will say, yet not so opposed as they may seem. "Subway," however, I choose, because its language is strongly poetic and it also serves as an example of the frustration of this definitely modern poet. I wish I could give Mr. MacLeod more space than this, for his book is various, but I must pass on:

SUBWAY

*I had moose thoughts in the darkness,
Crippled in the valleys of my mind
And hamstrung with experience.
Shot so that the blood was a wound
For my head and the night a bandage
To cover up my body.
I sat with hands crossed like a promise
While the python was a silver noise
In the tunnels beneath the city.
I had no time to discover what lay
Between the mountains and the ocean.
There were no birds to fly
With the seasons between one country
And another. If I did not move
It was because I did not know
My destination: one stop was as good
As another.*

In an era of such flux as the present, one stop seems as good as another to many poets. The age is too bewildering, the future too uncertain. One can hardly blame them.

Charles Reznikoff is another free-versifier whose work I have already mentioned as distinguished. His "In Memoriam: 1933" is published by The Objectivist Press at 10 West 36th Street, this city, and is strongly racial. He seems to me the best of the definitely Jewish poets writing today, since the death of *James Oppenheim*. This poem of his, which might be subtitled "a short history of the Jews," appeared originally in *The Menorah Journal*. It has both dignity and power, sonorous language and brilliant atmosphere, and it is well condensed.

Alastair W. R. Miller's name will be familiar to readers of *The Saturday Review*. His "Stages of Pursuit" comes to me from Basil Blackwell, 49 Broad Street, Oxford, England. I had previously read some of it in manuscript; and I admit that Mr. Miller is, for me, often most difficult to follow. Stranger love poems never were! There is, taking the book as a whole, a certain cross of Donne with Blake. Yet there is a personal modernity too. The poem "Juniana" has a peculiar magic, though it becomes at times rather a far-rago of nonsense. Yet there is the true

motion of poetry under all this attitudinizing and esotericism, the current of the stream under the lily-pads and water-weeds. Mr. Miller is in this little book one of the most unclear of modern poets, and yet one cannot deny his subtlety of apprehension.

I cannot wait longer to take up the books I mentioned when I began. The rest of the shelf will have to wait until a later day.

Even more peculiar a poet than Mr. Miller is our own *Marianne Moore*, the selection from whose poems (Macmillan) has been made by T. S. Eliot. The lady being a friend of my childhood, I cannot regard her work with the complete detachment I should like to attain; although I have contended for some years that, interesting as her observations are to me, she is really more the essayist (in the best sense of the term) than the poet. I am glad to see also that in her postscript this poet pays tribute to one in her immediate family "who thinks in a particular way." This is Miss Moore's mother, an unusual person in any age. Miss Moore has a deep appreciation of her mother's gift of expression. As for the selection, it seems to me that Mr. Eliot has done his work well. He records, in an interesting introduction to the book, his conviction "that Miss Moore's poems form part of the small body of durable poetry written in our time." What I myself like best about them is their odd learning, their occasionally delicious descriptive phrase, and the queerest lurking laughter, mixed with a certain primness, that has been in almost any woman poet since Emily Dickinson. But there is no other similarity between the two. Miss Moore impresses her own die upon the page, and it is unmistakable. If you take this book as the conversation of an elliptical but pungent juggler of disquisitions, presenting to you veritable artichokes of observation, you will have a great deal of pleasure out of it. But don't expect it to be like anything else you ever read, because it isn't!

In striking contrast to the interesting learning and intellectual subtleties of Miss Moore, which I can deeply enjoy at times, are the American ballads of *MacKinlay Kantor*, author of the much-acclaimed novel, "Long Remember." "Turkey in the Straw" (Coward-McCann) is the real vernacular

*Now all brave Iowayans listen to me,
I'll tell of a dreadful massacre—*

and also (for vernacular is only a part of it) this primitive verse secretes the element of poetry. Nor is it all primitive verse nor of the American past. Our American present is in it too. You can't hog-tie this verse. It ranges from Simon Kenton to Captain Gray, from regular ballad measure to expressive free verse, though it is all rootedly American folksong. The "Sheik" of the Movies and the Minnesota Brigade in the late Great War are here, as well as Lincoln at Gettysburg, and the black bison, and the catamount and the war-whoop. It is a book of much historical interest and of rich sentimental associations.

To Robert Nathan I owe my introduction to "A Brook of Leaves," by *Horatio Colony* (Boston: Richard Badger). It was sent to him and he brought it to me merely remarking that here and there he had found a rather original touch. The book has vigor and spontaneity, and the choice of subject and turn of phrase are idiosyncratic. It has also faults of clumsiness, dragged-in rhyme, and a too bland, sometimes almost ridiculous, ingenuousness in its more Dionysian moments. It is frankly pagan for the most part. But it is instinct also with the joy and richness of life. A book of definite promise and some achievement.

I cannot interpret *Conrad Aiken's* "Landscape West of Eden" (Scribner's), but can recommend it for its haunting music and its dream pictures. It is a beautiful small book, and a languorous musing on life interpreted through fabulous symbols. Man hovering between the mystery of his origin and the equal mystery of his destiny. But the poem flows and changes as dreams flow and change, and the complete meaning remains obscure. This, to me, is a lesser poem of Aiken's.

In the next instalment of "Round about Parnassus" I hope to take up a number of the newer volumes.

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