

Human Relations

CRITERIA FOR THE LIFE HISTORY WITH ANALYSES OF SIX NOTABLE DOCUMENTS. By John Dollard. New Haven: Institute of Human Relations, Yale University Press. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HORACE M. KALLEN

TO judge by this book, the Institute of Human Relations down at New Haven is reliving the experience of one M. Jourdain set down in a play of Molière's. M. Jourdain found great illumination in the discovery that he spoke prose. Mr. Dollard exhibits in a Ph.D. way a similar *éclaircissement* at the idea that human relations are relations between individuals, and that consequently to know social causes as they actually operate is to know individuals. What Mr. Dollard calls "the life history" is a way of stating knowledge about an individual. Being "scientific," he believes that there is one best way of stating this knowledge. His "criteria" are the differentiae of this perfect way. He enumerates seven, viz: (1) The subject must be viewed as a specimen in a cultural series; (2) the organic motors of action ascribed must be socially relevant; (3) the peculiar role of the family group in transmitting the culture must be recognized; (4) the specific method of elaboration of organic materials into social behavior must be shown; (5) the continuous related character of experience from childhood through adulthood must be stressed; (6) the "social situation" must be carefully and continuously specified as a factor; (7) the life-history material itself must be organized and conceptualized.

Much of his book is talk about papers by Alfred Adler, Jessie Taft, Freud, Thomas and Znaniecki, Clifford Shaw, and H. G. Wells in the light of these "criteria." He reproaches those who in his judgment have failed to employ them all.

To which one can only say "as you like it." I myself don't. I find that Mr. Dollard does not deviate from the traditional punditry of the field. He both labors the obvious and obscures it with professorial writing. It seems to me bad sense as well as bad logic to reproach any one for failing to do what he would have done if he had been somebody else doing something different. Criteria can be extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsically they are the consequences of an idea or a method. Intrinsically they are its logical structure—its clearness and distinctness, its consistency and economy. It is possible for a system or a method to be intrinsically perfect and extrinsically barren, or extrinsically rich and fertile and intrinsically defiant of all logics. So far as life-histories are concerned, there are fifty-seven ways of constructing sociological laws and every single one of them is right. The choice between them is esthetic and sectarian, not scientific and consequential. Adler and Freud, for example, whom Mr. Dollard finds less perfect, measured by his "criteria," than Thomas and Znaniecki, have thus far been far more fertile in consequences. Apart from consequences, the issue is *de gustibus*.

Horace M. Kallen is lecturer in the New School for Social Research.

IN a full length novel of Dublin life she has fulfilled the literary promise made in her book of stories, "*Poor Women*"

Norah Hoult



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—Dublin Magazine.

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The New Books

Fiction

BUTCHER BIRD. By Reuben Davis.
Little, Brown. 1936. \$2.50.

Max Beerbohm pointed out a long time ago that in a world in which a good many people wear masks, it is not half so much fun to unmask the wicked villain as it is to discover that behind the mask of wickedness may lie—atomy to the contrary notwithstanding—a golden heart. And it is this old charm of coming upon good where evil was to be expected and not his cotton field Negroes, fresh and veracious as they are, that makes "Butcher Bird" of Reuben Davis a volume of delightful entertainment.

Certainly the Negro is no longer a surprising newcomer in the house of American literature. But the truth is, as "Butcher Bird" and numerous other novels of the Negro indicate, that the Negro in our fiction is generally a figure of the sheerest romance. This does not mean that the black man is not often veraciously drawn. Reuben Davis has presented the black community of Caney Point with a clarity and an understanding which makes its individuals stand out in the almost astronomically lengthening gallery of dark portraits in our literature. But it is only necessary to wash the black off the skins of his characters to emphasize the utter, the pleasantly familiar romance of his tale.

A good but stubborn country boy falls in love with a gay young lady from the town, who has returned to the country only because her glint-hard lover is in jail. She accepts the country boy's help and his love with no intent save to serve the cheating of her lover. But, when the country boy comes to town at her call to be robbed by her lover and, instead of being robbed, shoots the city crook with the city crook's own pistol, and takes the girl back to the country, she finds a happiness in decent love she had never known in the old fast company. So when

the city crook with his bullet hole healed comes again seeking to profit by the murder of her country boy husband, she puts her body between them and takes the bullet in supreme sacrifice to righteousness and love.

A grand old romantic drama it is. White boys and girls have played it countless times in every costume against every scene. But with Caney Point black folk playing its parts, all of its old dramatic appeal is enhanced by a new company of appealing actors. Mr. Davis knows his cotton field Negroes and how to make them live in print. Quite as important, he knows how as a romantic story teller to tell a good old romantic tale.

J. D.

COOLIE. By Madelon Lulofs. Translated from the Dutch by G. J. Renier and Irene Clephane. Viking. 1936. \$2.

This sociological study of a Javanese coolie is an attack on the enforced-labor system that prevailed some twenty years ago in the Dutch East Indies, and to some extent, in less vicious form, continues to exist. The protagonist of the story, lured from his native mountains to the rubber plantations of Deli on the island of Sumatra by false promises of wealth, women, and gambling, finds the actuality a living hell. Coming in violent contact with the civilization of the nineteenth century, he sets about his task of battling the virgin forest in unison with his co-slaves. When his contract is run out, he is all too easily persuaded to sign up again by the flattery of the *mandur* (foreman)—who gets a cut on every contract renewed. And soon poor Ruki, hopelessly in debt, with never a care for the morrow, knows no better than to continue his life of toil, regulated by the white man's *tontong* (gong), an unending succession of tapping and weeding the rubber trees to produce the White Money for his masters. When in the end escape is in sight, his gambling instinct gets the

Richard Aldington

If you treasure his *Death of a Hero* and *All Men Are Enemies*, you will want to own this new book of "sketches and ideas"—recent short pieces of diverse and absorbing sorts, penetrating fragments that illuminate many phases of life with the perception of a fine and distinguished mind.

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Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
LIBEL Edward Wooll (Macrae-Smith: \$2.)	Sir Mark Loddon, accused of being impostor—and worse—by wartime comrades. Was he or was he not?	Rather ragged writing offset by eventful story, with a puzzling plot, and effective court room scenes.	Entertaining
THE HAVANA HOTEL MURDERS Frank Dudley (Houghton Mifflin: \$2.)	Head of American commission and Cuban strangely murdered in Havana hostelry. Solution by Dr. Lucas Brush and pretty girl.	Mixture of intrigue, cold-blooded ambition, calm and clever sleuthing, Bacardi rum, romance, and tropic sunshine.	Grade B
DEATH GOES TO SCHOOL Q. Patrick (Smith & Haas: \$2.)	Murder of students in English boys' school involves staff, pupils, even a Bishop. Teacher and bright boy solve it.	Though slightly unfair in denouement the telling is good, the dialogue bright, and background interesting.	Passable