

vides the background for Mr. Dennis's implacable insistence on a collective social discipline, which he prefers to have come by way of fascism than by way of a communist dictatorship of the proletariat.

As a social philosopher he cannot maintain the level he reaches as an economist, but there is much insight as well as brute strength in his exposure of the fallacies of liberal democracy, and his theory of the inevitable rule of the "élite." In a time of much confused and wishful thinking, an author frank enough to assert the identity of right and might, is welcome indeed, however profoundly one may disagree. And a thoroughly candid intellectual argument for fascism is an immensely valuable contribution to current thought.

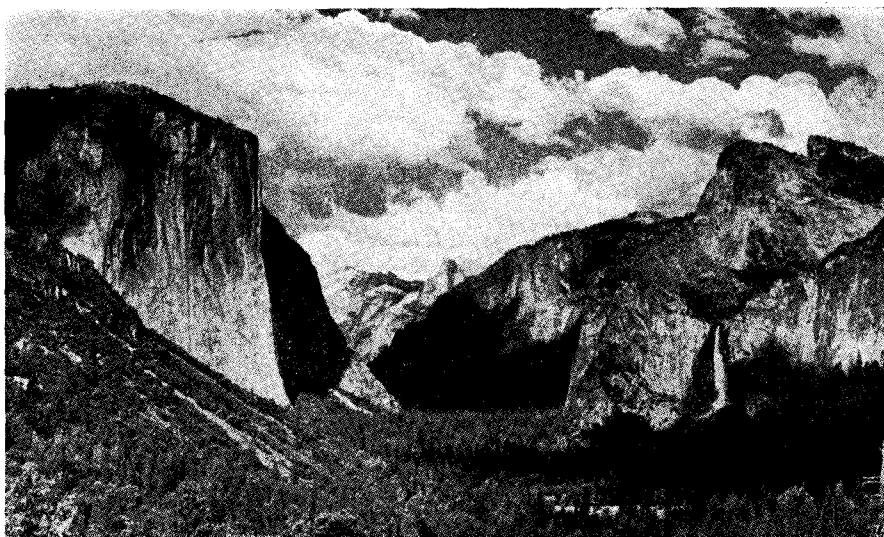
The kind of fascism under discussion is, however, not the kind made familiar by our reading of Italian or German events, or Sinclair Lewis's translation of these to American terms. It is a rationale after the event—and a far more intelligent and reasonable rationale than has come out of either Italy or Germany. There is little more than a feeble defense of present-day practice in the existing fascist countries. Rather is there a search for logic and principle behind that practice.

The theory may be briefly stated thus: Capitalism is doomed. The choice is between fascism and communism, both being revolutionary upsurges of a submerged élite, imposing collectivism by force. Fascism is preferable, and should be chosen even by the élite still in power, since it is the only alternative to their "liquidation" under communism. It is also preferable, because it does not necessitate civil war, and it retains more capitalist features, such as petty private ownership and private initiative, and an open market.

At this point Mr. Dennis is at his weakest, for an open market is not compatible with the planned production of abundance which he postulates. Here, perhaps, he is attempting to placate a public opinion which he otherwise ignores, as in his disregard of the power of American tradition, and its fear of arbitrary executive authority.

But the weaknesses of this book are readily apparent. Most glaring perhaps is the failure to consider a third radical alternative, an American brand of socialism via democracy. The significance of the book is its positive contribution to clear thinking. The only reason it is not dangerous is, as I have already suggested, because no fascist leaders could afford to be as intellectual as Mr. Dennis demands.

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Ansel Adams

YOSEMITE VALLEY. From "Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada."

High Adventure

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE SIERRA NEVADA. By Clarence King. New edition with Preface. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1935. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

IFIRST read this book some twenty years ago, and ever since have talked about it in and out of season whenever the American wilderness and books about it have been discussed. In spite of the editions noted in the excellent preface by Francis P. Farquhar, it has been undeservedly neglected by writers on Americana, and very little read even in California, where it should be famous.

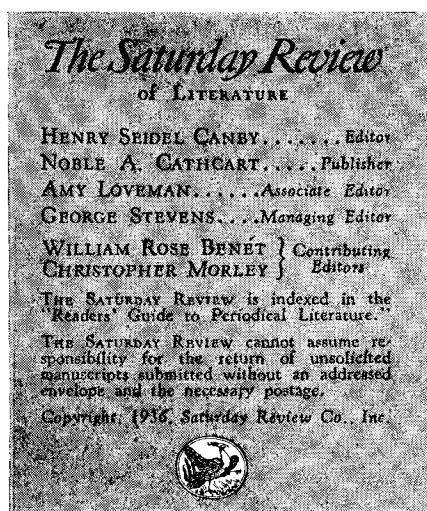
Clarence King headed West in 1863 after his graduation from Yale, perhaps to avoid the war then raging, but certainly not to keep out of danger, for of that he courted and got plenty in the high Sierras. By chance he met Professor Brewer who was engaged under Whitney in the first scientific exploration of the lower Sierras, then little known, and for five or six years reveled in geological adventure.

He must have been a good geologist in spite of his bad guesses as to the origin of the Yosemite, for he later became chief of the United States service and made notable contributions to the organization of the science in this country. Geology, however, is the least of the elements in this high-spirited book. King was a sensitive, broadly educated man, with a talent for description, a good sense of humor, and a romantic appreciation of beauty. And he was fortunate enough to see a new world still virgin and unspoiled in its magnificent natural beauty, still with its few human inhabitants, a forest and a frontier. Like Bartram he was able to describe a unique part of the continent before exploitation had sullied it. Furthermore, he climbed unknown snow mountains, and explored dangerous glaciers, when mountaineering as a sport

was in its infancy. He saw marvels, met with nerve-taking adventures, had a gorgeous time, and put it all in this book.

The Yosemite, Shasta, and the Kings Canyon country are the three regions informally described. Muir has redone the Yosemite, more soberly and more accurately. But this book is the classic for the Kings River country and Mount Whitney. This is still an area of magnificent canyon, stupendous sequoia forest, and jagged mountain, not easily accessible except by a few motor roads. When I knew it in 1912 it was still a "packing" country, no roads, few trails. For King it was still a wilderness, a wilderness made more exciting because he had a genius for losing his way and taking the hardest route up a mountain. He was an enthusiast, which made his colleagues remember him with a distrust which seems to have been unjustified. His weaknesses were esthetic not moral. Beauty intoxicated him, words intoxicated him. His book is full of adjectives, diffuse sometimes, overwritten now and then in the bad magazine style of the period, but certainly a masterpiece of vital, uplifted youth, on a spree of adventure. And being intensely impressionable he set down observations that his soberer colleagues could and would never have recorded. There are delightful and invaluable pictures of the mountaineers of the 60s in these chapters. "The Newtys of Pike," which tells how a Missouri nomad offered a thousand razorbacks as dowry for his six foot daughter, should be reprinted in every collection of American stories. And there are Indians, bad Mexicans, 49ers, the best moving pictures of the Sierras I should say outside of Bret Harte, and all true to impression if not to fact.

"Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada" belongs decidedly in that small but distinguished nature library which is one of the features of American literature. It is one of the obligatory books for readers who wish to know their country before industrialism stereotyped it.



He Kept His Nerve

MANY may think that Mark Twain has been too much written about in the year of his centenary. We do not agree. Not enough has been said of his biting realism. Not enough has been said of his essential radicalism. Not enough has been said of his judgment and his nerve.

It would be an interesting job for a research worker to take his "Tom Sawyer," his "Huckleberry Finn," his "Pudd'nhead Wilson," his "Life on the Mississippi," and compare them character by character, episode by episode, opinion by opinion, with the work of the new school of the Mississippi valley—the Faulkners, Caldwelles, et al. Readers of Twain's "humorous" narratives, if they will reread, or remember, will find the entire panoply of human weakness, vice, degeneration, prejudice, and superstition in those books. Exploited share-croppers, terrorized Negroes, brutal overseers, corrupt and prejudiced courts, infinite human stupidity, and crass ignorance—they are all in those narratives. Leave out Pudd'nhead Wilson, leave out Aunt Polly, leave out Jim the Negro, and a few aristocrats who had a code if no other morals,—then retell those stories with emphasis upon the degeneracy, the ignorance, the cocksure prejudice of the small town and the back country, and you will get Faulkner out-Faulknered, because these mid-century Americans are felt to be typical not pathological, Caldwell out-Caldwelled, because their cruel blood lusts, their muddled ethics, their frequent delusions are seen to be symptoms of universal human nature. Only sexual depravity is spared us in Twain's portraits, so considered, and that is kept implicit from no lack of knowledge, as a scrutiny of the text makes clear.

Remember the feud in "Huckleberry Finn" and the murder and attempted lynching in the river town. Remember the stupid virulence of Pudd'nhead Wilson's community. Remember, in the same books, the ruthless analysis of Negro morals as they had been shaped by the

greed and arrogance of the whites. Remember the reflections of Twain's own experience with economic oppression and what now would be called fascist tyranny, in his fantasy of sixth century England, "A Yankee at King Arthur's Court."

But there is of course an extraordinary difference between this first realist of the Mississippi valley and his successors. The contrast is not in humor or the lack of it, for in these bitter sub-plots and background studies of Twain there is no humor, but rather a deadly passion of wrath and irony and contempt. The important contrast is not in Twain's desire to write a readable book that would please not merely shock. This very human desire (and would that more writers with something vital to say would yield to the same craving to be read) did lead Mark Twain into melodrama, notably in "Tom Sawyer" and "Pudd'nhead Wilson." But this melodrama was never more than a gaudy superstructure over his essential realism which shows through whenever necessary with an effect of truth which is increased by the exaggerations of sentiment to which it is a foil. Indeed if Twain was warped from reality it was by his intense humanitarianism; not by his melodrama.

No, the contrast is in nerve. Mark Twain, the peak pessimist in American literature so far (see the excerpts from Pudd'nhead Wilson's note book), never lost his nerve. He did not give up humanity because he so heartily disliked a wide variety of predatory specimens of man and woman. He did not call for revolutions because the great exploiting system which had built up the Mississippi Valley had so evidently produced a society with streaks of rot running through it in all directions. He did not put the blame for everything on a system, nor expect that any system would work without blame. He believed in change but he did not believe in change unless men were changed first to meet it; in spite of his low opinion of human nature he believed in character wherever he could find it, and knew it could be found, and that ideas no matter how good were useless without it, and that character without sound ideas might be a liability to progress. One wishes that there were some way to make the "pressure groups" as well as the revolutionaries—even more than the revolutionaries—consider his idea of Americanism.

"You see my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its office-holders. The country is the real thing; . . . it is the thing to watch over . . . ; institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out. . . . I was from Connecticut, whose Constitution declares 'that . . . the people . . . have at all times an undeniable and indefeasible right to alter their form of government in such a manner as they think expedient.'" But whoever gets up an insurrection or a

revolution "without first educating his materials up to revolution grade is almost absolutely certain to get left."

Twain had real patriotism, a term whose meaning the D. A. R.'s, the American Legions, and the other so-called patriotic organizations of our decades seem utterly to misunderstand. He had common sense, a principle in politics, which many of our communist intellectuals seem never to have acquired. He kept his nerve, which is more than can be said of most of the dismayed writers upon the present state of the Republic.

Eye and Ear

The American Library Association, in a recent bulletin, states that the demand for certain classics of literature has increased among children as well as among older readers. The movies are the cause. "David Copperfield," "The Count of Monte Cristo," "Little Women" are being read by the children. "Les Misérables," "Anna Karenina," and others are being read by their parents. This is one more bit of evidence to prove that the new appeals to the perennial desire of man to be lifted out of his own egoisms, supplement, without destroying, the older method of print. It is true that print dealt a blow to the old story-teller, who was forced to learn how to write in order to hold his audience. The eye was better than the ear, because the ear had to be in the presence of the teller while the eye did not. Now the reader brings the world to the ear, the movies bring the world to the eye. But the radio is arbitrary and partial, the movies can narrate and describe but cannot reflect or explain. Mr. Booth Tarkington was unduly pessimistic when he declared that the day of the novel was over. Commonsense as well as this testimony from the libraries shows that he was wrong.

Ten Years Ago

"Power," a translation of Lion Feuchtwanger's "Jud Süß," was published in this country in 1926. Like his other works of the war period, it had originally been suppressed in Germany. Adolf E. Meyer, who reviewed "Power" for this magazine, wrote: "Despite his academic tenacity Feuchtwanger has written a gripping tale. One's senses are stirred. The eighteenth century is unfurled with all its happy glories and all its reeking stench. The characters are vivid—so alive in fact that the reader perforce becomes a party to iniquity."

Today

Lion Feuchtwanger's new novel, "The Jew of Rome," a sequel to his "Josephus," is reviewed by Louis Untermeyer on page 5 of this issue. Mr. Untermeyer calls it "a novel in the most opulent vein by one of the most accomplished living novelists."