

Letters to the Editor: *Mr. Louis N. Feipel on Webster's International*

The following letter is of particular interest, since it comes from the man whom Bernard Shaw has called "the prince of proof-readers." Mr. Feipel's proof-reading is all unofficial. He has written hundreds of letters to well known authors listing typographical errors and editorial lapses in their books, often catching from two to four hundred mistakes in a single volume. The New Yorker had an interesting story about Mr. Feipel in its issue of August 23, 1930; to this we are indebted for the foregoing information, and for the statement that "Mr. Feipel has received . . . more than three hundred replies—from Arnold Bennett, Galsworthy, Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, Cabell, Norman Douglas . . . every writing person you can think of."

Noah's Ark

SIR:—Dr. Lucius H. Holt congratulates himself that no serious errors have occurred in getting out the Second Edition of Webster's New International Dictionary. (See S.R.L., Jan. 2, 1937, pp. 15-16.)

Besides the two to which he calls attention (s.v. Easter and Arkwright), he and all users of the Dictionary might be interested in the following:

p. 1063, col. 1, s.v. glass toweling: —CLASS CLOTH, 1. *should be—GLASS CLOTH, 1.*

p. 663, col. 2, s.v. Dahlia: 1 a . . . *pompom*, a small form of *show*; p. 1917, col. 1, s.v. pompon: 2 c A race of dahlias with small flowers. See Dahlia 1 a. *pompon should be pompom (or vice versa).*

p. 2559, col. 1, s.v. syndicator: Definition reads, "One who syndicates; a syndicatorer."

There is no "syndicatorer" listed in the vocabulary-place. There is a noun, "syndicateer" (one who controls, esp. financially, a syndicate).

p. 1878, col. 2, s.v. plaguy (adv.): Definition states, "Plaguily (see FLAT, adj., 1). *Colloq.*"

Referring to "flat, adj., 1," we read: "Having an even and horizontal surface, or nearly so, without marked prominences or depressions; level and smooth." What is the connection between "plaguy" and "flat"?

p. 692, col. 2, s.v. delicatessen (n.pl.): . . . also, a store where such foods are sold.

This should read, "also (*sing.*), a store where such foods are sold."

p. 2283, col. 1, s.v. septuplet, def. 1: One of seven children born at a birth. How about animals? Would it not read better, "One of seven offspring (mammals) born at a birth"?

p. 524, col. 3, s.v. collar of SS.: The definition ought to be emended so as to include the present-day use of this kind of collar by the Lord Chief Justice of England and the Lord Mayor of London.

p. 1782, col. 2, vocabulary-word "Par-thenope": Par-then'o-pe *should be* Par-then'o-pe [cf. Pe-nel'o-pe, p. 1809]

p. 1914, col. 2, s.v. polyphloesboean: polyphloisboism, polyphloisboism, n.



"WASN'T IT CUTE OF HER TO READ IT ALL THE WAY THROUGH BEFORE EXCHANGING IT FOR A SHIRLEY TEMPLE DOLL?"

Rant. [The "*Rant*," which is the definition of the word, should be in roman, instead of in italic.]

p. 330, col. 2, s.v. breakfast: breakfast tabl *should be* breakfast table.

p. 2248, col. 1, s.v. screw: thumbscre *should be* thumbscrew.

p. 1071, col. 1, s.v. go for: Definitions "b" and "c" read as follows: "b *Colloq.* To attack; c To aim at; to try to secure."

The semicolon after "attack" should be omitted.

The above findings do not include various instances of words which appeared in the First Edition but strangely enough are omitted from the Second Edition; nor do they touch upon inconsistencies and other vagaries in the actual contents of the Second Edition. These I am reserving for future use.

LOUIS N. FEIPEL.

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Brooklyn Public Library.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Proletarianitis

SIR:—It is more than refreshing to find in the SRL of January 9th Mr. Calverton's perspicacious article on "Proletarianitis." Long overdue is such a criticism of a type of writing, inherently dishonest, as Mr. Calverton avers, to which American writers of a certain kidney have thought it profitable to divert their talents. "Proletarian literature," says Mr. Calverton, "is literature which is dominated by a dynamic revolutionary idea and inspired by a collective purpose" . . . embodying "a belief in the working class as the dominant class of the future." But why call this "literature"? Is it anything more than propaganda—and dishonest propaganda at that, since it presents, as Mr. Calverton states, an untrue picture,

inspired by an alien "ideology" (in its own phrase) and produced after an alien model? Says Mr. Calverton: "Until we reach a stage of development wherein the American workers become proletarian-conscious, we shall not be able to develop a proletarian literature of any scope or power." Well, why should we? "The best we can do," he wisely adds, "is to write truthfully about the American scene as it is, without subscribing to any superimposed political line in our interpretation which tends to distort our vision of reality." True. And quite enough, one should say, in behalf of either literature or the "proletariat!"

KATHERINE WILSON.

Berkeley, Cal.

(Readers of *The Saturday Review* will recall that Katherine Wilson's letter on keeping politics out of book reviews, printed March 28, 1936, started a long and still unsettled controversy among our correspondents.—Ed.)

Mash Note

SIR:—I wish to call your attention to an error that appeared in my review on page 16 of *The Saturday Review* for the 23rd. I hope it was typographical. I quote: "The name is very descriptive for the terrain is essentially *mile* after mile of *mash* and savannah." If this is the case I intend to head for the Bahr-el-Ghazal immediately. I must admit a liking for old Kentucky corn licker made from mash and if mile after mile of said substance exists in equatorial Africa, I do not intend to miss a bit of it. I am writing the Royal Geographical Society about this discovery as this product seems to be omitted from their series of economic geographical maps.

Cleveland, Ohio.

JULIAN W. FEISS.

(In the original review, read "marsh" for "mash."—Ed.)

Both Your Houses

WE OR THEY. By Hamilton Fish Armstrong. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1936. \$1.50.

HITLER OVER RUSSIA. By Ernst Henri. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1936. \$2.50.

Reviewed by VERA MICHELES DEAN

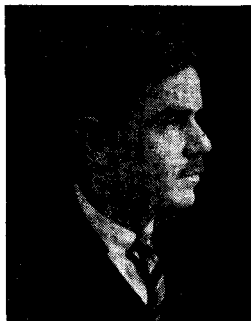
IN a slim but stimulating book the editor of *Foreign Affairs* undertakes to answer some of the crucial questions raised by the uneasy cohabitation in Europe of democracies and dictatorships. In the struggle waged by the two doctrines for domination of the Continent—and of the world—which will survive? We or they? Democracy or dictatorship? How are democracies to deal with aggressive dictatorships? Should they beat an orderly retreat, hoping to save their own possessions by giving the dictators a free hand to seize those of weaker neighbors? Or should they form a united front against dictatorships on the march, ready to defend the cause of freedom wherever it is menaced, by force if necessary?

In answering these questions Mr. Armstrong, like most writers on the subject, is hampered by the incontrovertible fact that "nobody who cares about the future of democracy wants war," and that liberalism would probably be unable to survive "the wartime curbs that would be prerequisite to victory." He consequently opposes a "preventive war," as well as a crusade of democracies to aid either fascism or communism, which he regards as equally "obnoxious." The democracies, he declares, should collaborate with dictatorships "on routine matters in a fair spirit, keep every engagement entered into with them to the letter, and show calmness and official reserve in the face of provocative gestures only." They should strengthen themselves from within by social and economic reforms, and neglect no opportunity abroad "of mitigating the economic and financial diseases which have persuaded great and proud peoples to accept as normal the mental and moral status of serfdom."

Mr. Armstrong's temperate program assumes that dictatorships, which constantly hold up European peace at the point of a gun, are prepared to act in a fair spirit, to keep their engagements—after repeatedly trampling treaties under foot—and to content themselves with bellicose gestures stopping short of bellicose acts (an assumption squarely contradicted by Japan in Manchuria and Italy in Ethiopia). Mr. Armstrong him-

self points out that "we should be under no illusions that a live-and-let-live relationship between democracies and dictatorships can last indefinitely."

If that is the case, what should the democracies do when the break comes? When an act of aggression has been committed? Mr. Armstrong sees only two possible courses: "to accept aggression with a pretense of good grace; or to oppose it by preconceived action between all nations which feel menaced by the growing tendency to recognize the *fait accompli* as a substitute for treaty observance and orderly negotiation." At this point one expects the author to attack the Gordian knot formed by the reluctance of democracies to face another war and their almost equally strong reluctance to let the dictatorships trample the freedom of other peoples under foot. But beyond stating that the democracies, including the United States, should collaborate with one another and "particularize responsibilities, remove ambiguities, and dissolve illusions" regarding their concerted action, Mr. Armstrong does not come to grips with the issue of war and peace.



Kaiden-Keystone

HAMILTON FISH
ARMSTRONG

Yet he subsequently points out that even the United States, in spite of its desire for neutrality, cannot escape the struggle between democracy and dictatorship "because the aggressive forces have acquired momentum which their leaders could not control even if they would, and because the battlefield is worldwide." Again and again Mr. Armstrong nears the point of saying that the only effective weapon against aggressive dictatorships is the threat of force, only to take refuge in the hope that the dictators may pass from the scene before a showdown becomes necessary. Only at the close of his analysis—which would have been sharpened by the omission of familiar historical material—does he reach the conclusion that between dictatorship and democracy there is no compromise. "Our fathers won their liberties by force, in three centuries of struggle. Programs of action to take those liberties away by force give notice that we must be ready at some point to reply in kind." At the risk of being accused of nagging, the reader may ask when that point will be reached, and whether meanwhile the procrastination, concessions, and vacillations of democracies do not merely strengthen the dictatorships in their belief that democracies will tolerate the most dangerous assaults on peace rather than accept the challenge of war.

That this challenge is on the point of being delivered by the Hitler dictatorship,

which has already formulated elaborate plans for an attack on the Soviet Union, is the thesis of Ernst Henri, already known for his sensational volume "Hitler over Europe?" In this no less sensational sequel the author, whose sympathies are openly on the side of communism against fascism, claims to reveal the intricate network of leagues, combinations, and personal relationships that Nazi Germany has allegedly established with all countries in Eastern and Southeastern Europe which have either already succumbed to fascism or threaten to do so in the near future. Like most writers who base their analysis of international affairs solely on dialectical materialism, Henri excludes or minimizes the endless contradictions and shifts in foreign and domestic politics which might force modification of his ironclad thesis. It is no news even to mere headline readers that the Nazis (following in the footsteps of their wartime predecessors who, without ever hearing of fascism, had occupied the Ukraine in 1918), are eager to obtain land and raw materials in the Soviet Union; or that Nazi diplomacy has sought to build up an anti-communist front stretching from Spain to Japan. But by adopting the mysterious airs of a master-detective and secret-dispatch-reader, Henri does little to clarify an intricate international situation of which the fascist-communist conflict is but one aspect.

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Neither Satire Nor Propaganda

THE PERSIAN JOURNEY OF THE REVEREND ASHLEY WISHARD AND HIS SERVANT FATHI. By Elgin Groseclose. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by PEARL S. BUCK

WHEN I read this book I was puzzled by it. I read it twice. The first time I enjoyed it very much, feeling, until I came to the very end, that it was a piece of rather pleasant satire on the whole business of Christian propaganda in foreign countries. The author, I thought, showed nicely his theme that our mechanistic religion is not so truly religious as the faith which the people had whom he went to save. When I came to the end, however, I doubted that the book was a satire, and so I read it again. The second time I felt it might be part of that literature which the Protestant churches furnish to their constituency in order to educate them to the support of foreign missions.

But upon investigation I found that the book was neither satire nor Protestant literature. Mr. Groseclose is a young engineer whose work in Persia gave him unusual opportunities to see something of Persian life and something of mission-