

The World His Garden

THE HUMAN COMEDY. By James Harvey Robinson. With an Introduction by Harry Elmer Barnes. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

THE Victorians were more honest. Eighty years ago this book would have appeared as "The Remains of James Harvey Robinson." It is a collection of essays and fragments assembled by Dr. Barnes and forced into a rough chronological unity. Just how much editorial work was necessary is not clear from Dr. Barnes's introduction, but there must have been a good deal. Dr. Barnes himself confesses that he has had in some few places to "fill in certain gaps or to enlarge upon brilliant fragments." His veneration for the master is well known, however, and the frequent awkward sentences, abrupt transitions, and clumsy figures are no doubt the result of this veneration, which has retained what Robinson, had he lived, would probably have altered greatly.

As it stands, "The Human Comedy" is hardly more than a repetition and partial expansion of material already in print in "The Mind in the Making" and in "The New History." If, as Dr. Barnes asserts in his introduction, James Harvey Robinson had since the earlier books were published "gone on reflecting in a more profound and original fashion than ever before upon the drama of mankind" there is little in this book to show it. Occasional flashes of the old Robinson, touches of the Voltairean wit his students knew—and often dreaded—light up long stretches of improving prose which might almost have appeared in Dr. Barnes's column in the *World-Telegram*. Substantially this latest volume is a running commentary on "The Mind in the Making," with bulges in directions dictated by Robinson's more recent interests, or by the exigencies of a commission from a periodical—the implications for social science of twentieth

century natural science, the promise of adult education, the menace of post-war nationalism, the possibility of discerning historical "laws."

This is not then by any means the best of Robinson, but it was probably worth saving, if only to bring again before the public one of the most important historians of the last generation. Robinson never produced, as Turner did, one of those grand generalizations which open new worlds of study. Nor did he ever achieve a many-volumed history of his own, or even an imposing accumulation of monographs. He did not quite invent social and intellectual history, which may be said in a sense to go back to Herodotus. But more than any other academic historian in America, he helped bring before the public—and especially before the secondary school teachers, so important in the diffusion of culture in America—the kind of interest in the whole fabric of our past which has brought history to life again after the oratorical historians had about written it out. Robinson was, like the Wells he goes out of his way so often to praise, almost too receptive of new ideas, too ready to follow all sorts of leads, especially from the semi-sciences of psychology and sociology. His latest enthusiasm, often reflected in "The Human Comedy," was biology. He seemed to find solace in the wriggings of tiny one-celled creatures, so purposeful and yet so untroubled.

For in this even more than in earlier works, there are overtones of despair. Robinson was always conscious of the stupidities and cruelties of human life. He had studied sympathetically those ethical patterns in which men have eliminated stupidity and cruelty, but he was aware that in the past neither reason nor eloquence has availed to impose those patterns on men's actions. He had absorbed the "anti-intellectualism" of the pre-war years—indeed, he was one of the first to introduce Pareto the sociologist

into America. He knew men couldn't suddenly be made over, knew that even revolutions stop well short of that high, clear place he saw ahead. The mind, he felt, had hitherto done little enough to describe clearly the mess men were in; it hadn't done a thing to clean up the mess. Yet Robinson, who worked so hard to destroy Christian miracles, wanted very much to believe in a supreme miracle—the immediate triumph of mind on this earth. What is sometimes called his Voltairean wit is the spark that flies between these poles of idealistic striving and realistic observation. But Robinson, except perhaps when poking about the microscopes at Woods Hole, never quite attained the wisdom *Candide* bought so dear. The world remained his garden, and it wanted so much more than cultivating!

Tracking a Poet

A WALK AFTER JOHN KEATS. By Nelson S. Bushnell. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1936. \$2.50.

MR. BUSHNELL has done what many of us have only thought of doing and would never have carried out with anything like his resolution, thoroughness, and gusto. He set out to follow the route Keats and Charles Brown took in their northern walking-tour of 1818. It meant walking about 630 miles, and Mr. Bushnell, with no companion, and with the advantages of "twentieth-century roads and lodgings, superior food and weather," accomplished the journey in thirty days, a third less time than that of the original travelers. Except in time Mr. Bushnell adhered to the canonical schedule with the scrupulous accuracy of a scholar and devotee; in order to cross to Ireland from the right place, now no longer a point of departure, he even taxed his budget to hire a boat and voyaged in state.

In spite of the endless small difficulties of a journey off the beaten track, and blisters and moments of discouragement, Mr. Bushnell evidently had a good time, and his travel-diary enables the sedentary reader to share the palm without the pang. He met no personages, and he does not gush about Highland scenery, and one may say, in no disparaging sense, that his chronicle is mostly of small beer (less metaphorically, of Bass and scalding black tea). His anecdotes and snatches of talk from roadside and inn have an unexaggerated flavor which one's own small Scottish experience corroborates. This outdoor book pleasantly vivifies a chapter in Keats's life which the literary critic usually considers only in relation to his poetry. Mr. Bushnell does not forget that, but he writes as a hiker; incidentally, he corrects some errors in the biographies. The book includes, of course, ample quotations, and also some attractive old engravings and a map.

Louis XV Watches

By THEDA KENYON

YOU flaunted your worth, and the exquisite way you were wrought
With enamel and jewels, and intricate, strangely shaped cases.
You knew no closed door: you seemed powerful, your myriad graces
Adorning the Cardinal's quean, or the favorite at Court;
And watching you, no one imagined how madly you sought
To escape from your bondage: your duty was marking the paces
Of time—, the relentless and stern,—and your gay little faces
Were bribed—with enamel and gems!—to reflect what they ought.
But here, time is the slave, and his aeons bereft of their power:
You are turned rebel—you glitter, triumphant and gay,
Stubbornly holding your hands at some long-perished hour,
And making your very rebellion a brittle display!

I see you, and sighing hurry on: time still sets me my task,
And I still cloak my slavery under an intricate mask!

England in America

THE COLONIAL PERIOD OF AMERICAN HISTORY. *The Settlements*. Vol. II. By Charles M. Andrews. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1936. \$4.

Reviewed by VERNER W. CRANE

PROFESSOR ANDREWS'S history of English colonial institutions moves on in this second volume to the origins and early fortunes of Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Haven, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, and Maryland. Again are displayed the characteristic merits of the first volume, which well deserved the Pulitzer award in 1935: the broad scope, the imperial viewpoint, the incisive scholarship, the mastery of significant detail. The rationale of the work now appears more clearly. Another volume will complete the survey of English settlements on the continent and in the West Indies. A fourth will trace the development of English colonial policy. Only then, in Professor Andrews's opinion, will it be possible to measure the forces which transformed English ways in America into distinctive American ways.

This is a history of institutions. It is only incidentally a social history, though the beginnings of New England commerce and agriculture receive brief treatment. But institutional history as Andrews writes it is a broadly human subject, not merely an anatomy of charters and codes of law. He is happiest when he is tracing back through London vestries and the East Anglian countryside the connections of John Winthrop, Jr., of the Rev. John Davenport, of Theophilus Eaton; or displaying the ramifications of the Calvert kindred. In such familiar English associations were hatched famous projects of American planting. The pat-

terns were ready at hand in the practices of English guilds, corporate boroughs, trading companies, of parish and manor.

Through half the volume we are upon the familiar ground, to most readers, of the expansion of New England. The paths of the migrations from Massachusetts to Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Haven are strewn with historical controversies and popular misconceptions. Here there is no stumbling. The motives for expansion are clearly analyzed. One crux after another is resolved. Roger Williams's "soul liberty" (and later the toleration of Maryland) are exactly defined and weighed in the scales of contemporary ideas. The limited popular government of Connecticut is distinguished from the Massachusetts plan—and equally from modern conceptions of democracy and constitutionalism. Williams, Hooker, and their fellows are portrayed as Englishmen of their time rather than prophets of unseen American goals.

The rest of the book will be more novel, as it reveals less familiar aspects of colonial history. Too often it is forgotten that the West Indies were part of the same colonial world with Virginia and Massachusetts; that they were becoming the center of English interest in empire. Another hard test of the colonial historian Professor Andrews meets when he contrives to write clearly and even interestingly of the confusions of Maryland history before 1689.

His success in this direction is due to his appreciation of that other mode of colonization—proprietorship on a semi-feudal or manorial model—which first appeared in the sixteenth century, but was for a time overshadowed by corporate enterprise and the religious motive. "Anglicanism, not dissent," he reminds us, "manorial organization, not city

life, governed the thought and conduct" of the English privileged classes in the seventeenth century. In a brilliant chapter he elaborates the English background, and in America the results, of the aristocratic impulse. Mingling landlordism and government, it produced the great proprietary provinces, and also many a lesser grant, and many an abortive and forgotten project. It was singularly persistent, though from the beginning at odds with the instincts of the American frontier. One grandiose scheme Professor Andrews has discovered so late as 1763. Not indeed till 1806 was "the last proprietary claim by Englishmen to lands in America extinguished."

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A French Sea Novel

SALVAGE. By Roger Vercel. New York: Harper & Bros. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ARCHIE BINNS

HERE is a fine French sea novel, written by a landsman. To those acquainted with French sailors, the statement will hardly appear as a contradiction. At heart, approximately all Frenchmen, including sailors, are landsmen. Anyone who has followed the sea is familiar with the perpetually unhappy look of French sailors in foreign ports. The mental attitude of Frenchmen at sea can only be known by hearsay, as French ships are manned wholly by Frenchmen—perhaps on the theory that misery loves company—and Frenchmen seldom stray into ships of other nations. From hearsay, the reviewer has gathered that French sailors hate the sea.

"Salvage" bears out this theory. Some members of the crew of the salvage tug, *Cyclone*, are perpetually sick at sea. Other members never eat at sea. Others do not even attempt to sleep until the tug is safely back at her pier. The heroic wife of Captain Renaud spent most of her younger years with her husband, traveling about the seven seas in great sailing ships. In the experience where other women, in theory, at least, might have found high romance, Yvonne found something between imprisonment and crucifixion. One deduces that the captain himself does not love the sea.

This may sound like discouraging material for a sea novel. But the fact remains that Frenchmen do go to sea, and M. Vercel has caught them in the act in a book which has the ring of truth. The salvage tug and the sea are chiefly background for a powerful quadrangle situation involving Captain Renaud, his duty to his ship, Yvonne, and the wife of the Greek captain. The characters of "Salvage" are excellent, and their conflicts real. M. Vercel has told his stormy story in a clear, forceful style.



JOHN WINTHROP'S MILL IN CONNECTICUT COLONY
From Adams's "History of the United States" (Scribners).