

A Laureate's Prose

COLLECTED ESSAYS, PAPERS, ETC., OF ROBERT BRIDGES. New York: Oxford University Press. 1937. \$2.

Reviewed by ROBERT HILLYER

AS I write this review, I have before me the last volume of Bridges's essays and also a manuscript letter from him. His handwriting resembles fine italics; but the nervous scream of the italic typography on the printed page constantly disturbs the reader. Sentences of slow and majestic import, following one another in cumulative undertones, present themselves to the eye like a long fit of hysterics. The essays are spiritually essential, but physically almost impossible to read.

Yet the contemplative reader will surmount the difficulty, for he can not miss—even in the pieces written for an occasion—evidences of a philosophy which, if less formulated than Santayana's, is more experienced; notes on poetry and poetic technique by one of the greatest masters of the art; and a prose style as flexible as high discourse. There are four pieces in this volume: an address to the Swindon branch of the Workers' Educational Association, an address on the necessity of poetry, a radio speech on poetry, and an account of the casualty department of St. Bartholomew's hospital, written in 1878, when Bridges was an attending physician. It would be impossible to indicate the range of subjects included in these four papers, except as it is indicated by their titles.

In the address to the workmen, Bridges outlines his conception of a kind of workman's college, a community of laborers living amid conditions "such as our leisured classes now find in our old universities." The plan is economical and simple; but that Bridges guessed its human impracticability is shown by his knowledge of those amusements to which the city dweller is bound: "If a man proceed onwards by the way of wrong-living, he may descend as it were by steps or degrees from ugly form to ugly conduct, and from ugly conduct to ugly principles, until he finally arrives at the ultimate principle of all and learns what absolute ugliness is." The address, delivered in 1916, has references to the War, and in those aloof and moderate terms which were later to bring the Laureate into disrepute among the fanatics, when he was the first to extend his hand to the German professors when the War was over.

The two essays on poetry can not be epitomized. I pass them over with a recommendation of their excellence, and a few citations. "Whether a man speak or write, we say that he speaks or writes well, according as his meaning is plain, his ideas clear, and his language unambiguous." "Though we may say that Beauty is Truth (since all essential ideas are true in themselves), yet the terms Truth and Beauty are not interchangeable, for all truth is not beautiful." In the radio address, we find many evidences that Bridges was at work on the "Testament of Beauty" at the time. He was testing some of his ideas for his own satisfaction. For example, in describing a poet he says: "First I would call him a Pla-

tonist, because I am sure that it was from Plato that he got his belief that the thoughts of man are not mere notions born in his animal brain—as we may be apt to think—but are eternal essences or influences that come to him from without." Indeed, one clause from this essay is incorporated verbatim in the "Testament": "That there is Beauty in Nature, and that man loves it. . . ."

The account of the casualty department will be read with interest not only for itself, but also as a sidelight on the character of a man who wrote so fully because he had so fully lived. Now we have Dr. Bridges, remote from his study, from his benignant correspondence with the girlish and shrinking Hopkins, from the classics he delighted to read, the harpsichord he delighted to play, the hills he delighted to walk; ministering every year to some 30,000 of the poorest, the sickest, the squalidest human beings in London. Add to these patients, in their thousands, the sick soul of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose effusions, had it not been for Bridges's careful preservation and painstaking editing, would never have been known at all. Then hear the esthetic cult whining, "Bridges never appreciated Hopkins,"—and find terms for indignation! Perhaps the late Laureate himself provides for these latter-day patients: "Many of them owe their complaints to drinking eight pennyworth of beer a day."

I regret that these essays are printed in the freakish spelling which Bridges devised,—a sort of back look at Richard Stanyhurst and a forward look at e. e. cummings. But the defects of the great emphasize their magnitude; as the virtues of the small, their deficiency.

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Doctors' Symposium

MEDICINE AND MANKIND. Edited by Iago Galdston, M.D. New York: Appleton-Century Co. 1936. \$2.50.

THIS volume of essays, "lectures to the laity delivered at the New York Academy of Medicine," again proves that the art of medicine is becoming more closely allied each year to the art of literature. The contributors are Benjamin P. Watson, Howard W. Haggard, Harlow Brooks, George Draper, Foster Kennedy, Elmer V. McCollum, and Alexis Carrel, all distinguished men in their special branches of the medical sciences, and all bent on sharing their straitly acquired knowledge with the intelligently curious layman. That they are not equally successful is due in part at least, to the nature of their subject material. Most lay readers will find the diseases of Louis XIV more dramatic than the chemistry of vitamins, and then too, Dr. Haggard has the advantage of considerable experience in the field of "popular" writing. In more than one instance this reviewer felt that the doctors were taking for granted a little more knowledge on the part of the reader than is quite warranted, but the compression of years of research into a slight chapter is no simple task and one wonders not so much at an occasional obscurity as at their courage.

African Life

THE GENTLE SAVAGE. By Richard Windham. New York: William Morrow & Company. 1936. \$3.50.

GARI-GARI. By Hugo Adolph Bernatzik. New York: Henry Holt & Company. 1936. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JULIAN W. FEISS

TEN years ago if you had glanced through the latest lists of African books, the predominating subject would have been that of hunting. Fortunately the bloodthirsty period has passed and it seems that we are entering an era of ethnology. That this is distinctly a change for the better is indicated by the quality of these two books, both of which deal extensively with native life, lore, and customs.

"The Gentle Savage" is written by an able English painter, while "Gari-Gari" is the work of a well-known Austrian anthropologist. Strange to say both books cover regions very close to each other and to a certain extent are complementary. There is a striking similarity in the material and although approach is made from different angles by each author, the conclusions and subjects of each book are remarkably similar.

Possibly the most striking feature of these works is the splendid photography. I do not know how some of the pictures were secured but I suspect that all-seeing devil, the "candid camera," of being responsible for much. Irrespective of the technique employed, the photography is superb in both books. In "Gari-Gari" the picture opposite page 7 of a Sudanese girl arranging her silver anklets, is as graceful and beautiful a study of the human form as has ever been recorded photographically. The fact that most of these photographs are obviously unposed serves to enhance their value and charm.

Mr. Windham's book concerns the natives of the Bahr-el-Ghazal province, known amongst the whites of Africa as "The Bog." The name is very descriptive for the terrain is essentially mile after mile of marsh and savannah. The first European to study the region and write a description of its steaming vastness was that weird character, Dr. Eduard Schnitzer, known to the world at large as Emin Pasha. His notes and journals written from 1877-1887 are still the best and most authoritative sources of information on this portion of Africa. Mr. Windham has studied Emin Pasha's journals in detail and has profited from that great well of information as well as added to it.

Dr. Bernatzik travelled extensively in the country of the Dinka, Shilluk, and Nuer tribes along the upper reaches of the White Nile somewhat to the east of Mr. Windham's territory but also within the regions traversed by Emin Pasha. "Gari-Gari" is in many respects a far more graphic narrative than "The Gentle Savage" as Dr. Bernatzik covers greater territory and engages in hunting and bouts with malarial fever. The latter are more realistic than pleasant. The description may recall bitter memories to a few readers who have undergone this disagreeable experience alone in equatorial Africa.

Transitions of the Elizabethan Age

THE LITERATURE OF SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND. By *Esther Cloudman Dunn*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. \$2.50.

Reviewed by T. M. PARROTT

STUDENTS of Smith College are to be congratulated on having among them such a teacher of English literature as the author of this thoughtful, stimulating, and provocative book. It is doubtful, to be sure, whether any of them will use it as a textbook in courses. The preface expressly renounces all claim to being a history of sixteenth century literature, and it is not equipped with the dates, tables, and statistics dear to the undergraduate heart for preparations for examinations. But if Miss Dunn puts over in her classroom something of the fresh, up-to-date, and discriminating appreciation of poetry and drama which distills from the pages of this book her students must carry away something better than the data desired to obtain class A grades. The book itself will probably be more use to teachers than to students.

If not a history of Elizabethan literature, what is it? In the author's own words, it is an attempt to penetrate the glittering surface of Elizabethan life to its underlying values, to uncover its "essential reality." Like Professor Craig's recent profound and scholarly work "The Enchanted Glass," it deals less with the literature of an age than with the moral and intellectual life as reflected in its literature.

Miss Dunn sees the Elizabethan age as one primarily of transition from the set forms of medievalism to the clear light of seventeenth century rationalism. She stresses the survival of medieval modes and morals in conflict with the emergence of new and individualistic conceptions. To her that age seems in many ways a counterpart of our own, an age of dissolution and of revolution, marked by a loss of old standards and a fevered search for new. She reinforces this view by repeated comparisons: of Elizabethan prose, for example, based upon oral discourse, to the radio programs of today, of Elizabethan drama to our modern movies, of Shakespeare's soliloquies to the dramatic devices of Shaw and O'Neill. Miss Dunn is no cloistered academic scholar; she knows the world around her as well as that of the past.

Space forbids a detailed examination of the contents of this work and even more a carping criticism of occasional flaws and blunders. One might ask in what play Miss Dunn discovered the twins who were shipwrecked on the coast of Bohemia or whether an attendance at Reinhardt's "Midsummer Night's Dream" would not refute her assertion that Shakespeare's comedy does not get across to our modern world. But these are trifles. It is more important to stress her reevaluation of the "Rape of Lucrece" as a Senecan tragedy in narrative rather than in dramatic form, or her discriminating

analysis of Shakespeare's "Sonnets" as a compound of convention and personal experience. About one third of the book is devoted to Elizabethan drama in general and to Shakespeare in particular. To a lifelong student of this drama it is not altogether satisfactory. It seems to suffer from compression and simplification. Yet there are good things in it. The comparison of the run-of-the-mine playwright of that age with the script writer for the modern cinema is true as well as startling. The page from Heywood's "Captives"—thoughtfully reproduced in legible script on the opposite page—should bring home to the reader what Shakespeare's manuscript looked like when it went to the press and what difficulties his compositor had to wrestle with before he could set the words in type for posterity to wonder at.

A word of praise must be given in closing to the Reading List, an admirably chosen and carefully annotated "practical guide" for the teacher and student—does Miss Dunn really believe in the "general reader" for whom she says it is intended? Yet the "general reader," if curious about the great age of Elizabeth and free from academic prejudice or romantic idolatry of the Bard, may find pleasure as well as profit in Miss Dunn's work.

T. M. Parrott is professor emeritus of English at Princeton University. He has edited numerous works in English literature, and is the author of "Studies of a Booklover."

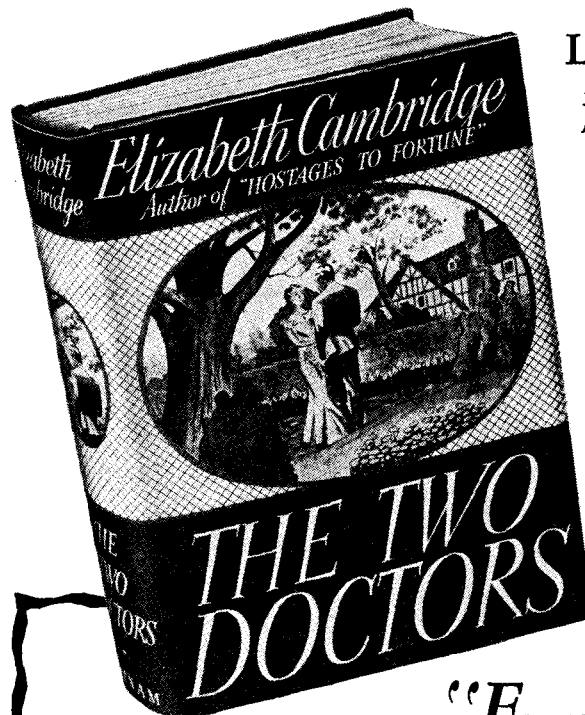
Misguided Jayhawkers

DEATH VALLEY PROSPECTORS. By *Dane Coolidge*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1937. \$2.50.

THE chapters of Dane Coolidge's book on aspects of Death Valley and its characters have unique value in that they are largely based upon first-hand information. Even the opening chapter, relating of the misguided Jayhawkers overland party of 1849, is original in its slant, for Shoshone Indians who dogged the party of strangers tell their story, as put into print and amended by descendants.

The chapters run: "White Ones Coming!" "The Bennett Party," "Burnt Wagons," "The Shoshone Indians," "Borax," "The Lost Breyfogle Mine," "Old Panamint," "Smitty," "John Lemoigne," "Shorty Harris," "Death Valley Scotty." Since Mr. Coolidge went through Death Valley in 1916, with a camera, and with the eye and ear of a feature writer, he has turned up a great deal of source material which is not available today. Representative characters, "Smitty," the burro man; John Lemoigne, the philosophical Frenchman; Denton, Englishman soldier of fortune; Shorty Harris, "single blanket jackass prospector": they are dead, but they and their ready yarns and lore are resurrected in photograph and print.

The seventeen full-page photographs, copyrighted by Mr. Coolidge, of scenes and persons, rank in value with the text.



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