

Old-Fashioned Fashion

FROM HOOPSKIRTS TO NUDITY. By Carrie A. Hall. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers. 1938. \$5.

Reviewed by ELIZABETH HAWES

ANYTHING I say about this book is exceedingly biased and probably unfair. Carrie A. Hall and myself are fundamentally of different generations. Our most basic ideas are, if not diametrically opposed, at least divergent.

This serves to point up a most interesting fact about Fashion. Mrs. Hall prints a picture of "the fiend of fashion from an ancient manuscript in the British Museum" which, with bat wings and fiendish head, exemplifies all the horrors of that "Dame." She devotes her first chapter to Style versus Fashion. "Fashion is the only tyrant against whom modern civilization has not carried on a crusade. . . ." "Fashions as they are decreed are often without justification. . . ." A couple of causes of fashion are: "love of change; and the influence of trade in the transient reign of objects of luxury." Who could disagree?

Fifty years spent in designing and making more than twenty thousand dresses have led Carrie Hall to these conclusions, as a much shorter time has put many of the rest of us in the same position. Perhaps the difference between fifty years in the trade and ten is what makes Mrs. Hall ready gracefully to give up her crusading spirit and allow that fashions will probably be just as "freaky" in the future as they have been in the past, unless the changing social conditions and the wholesome effect of the enlarged sphere of usefulness to which women have attained should so dominate the world of dress that it becomes the smart thing to dress sensibly.

Is it out of the question that even "the smart thing" will vanish? More important, does fashion now only influence "the transient reign of objects of luxury"? We have fashion in towels, cars, lamps, and every dress from \$3.75 up.

Mrs. Hall seems to feel that Fashion only concerns itself with "ladies," and the major part of her book, where she vouchsafes any criticism, blandly emphasizes the fact that there are a lot of things a real lady must never wear. "A gentlewoman never attracts attention to her feet or legs." Ye gods! Obviously we have no more gentlewomen, and why occupy one's mind with that problem? An improvement in the fashion of this decade is the "Gown for little women" which Mrs. Hall bases on the popularity of the motion-picture of that name. (Katharine Hepburn is about five feet seven.)

"From Hoopskirts to Nudity" should have its place on the library shelf in the Modes and Manners of a Past Gen-

eration section, and mainly for the pictures which tell the story. The text also tells the story, and best where it is inadvertently clinging to the past century in manners and ideas. "The first purpose of clothing was to provide comfort," says Carrie Hall.

My grandmother might have told me that. A lot of people may still think that. But anthropologists have given us cer-

tain historical facts which we can take or leave. Nowadays most of us prefer to take them. The first aim of clothing was to beautify the human form for the purpose of satisfying a very human desire: to be attractive to the other sex.

Different centuries may try to achieve this end in different ways, but don't let's, even kindly, calmly, and generously, like Mrs. Hall, try to mix our centuries.

Elizabeth Hawes, a leading American dress designer, is the author of "Fashion Is Spinach," recently reviewed in these columns.

SWEDES IN AMERICA

Edited by ADOLPH B. BENSON
and NABOTH HEDIN

Published in connection with the Swedish American Tercentenary 1938 celebration of the founding of the New Sweden colony, each of the chapters of this important volume has been written by a specialist in a particular field. The result is the first complete history in one volume of the Swedes in this country and of their contribution to American life. Illustrated. \$3.00

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YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

New Haven, Connecticut

A Psychiatrist's Career

WILLIAM ALANSON WHITE. *The Autobiography of a Purpose*. By William A. White, M.D. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by BERTRAM D. LEWIN, M.D.

DURING the last year of his life, Dr. White set down from his excellent memory an account of the salient facts of his professional life, which now appears a little over a year after his death, under the above title. It appears, therefore, while the memory of his robust and genial personality is still very vivid in the minds of his colleagues, friends, and students, who will welcome it for the factual data it contains.

From 1903 until his death Dr. White was Superintendent of St. Elizabeth's, the Government hospital for the mentally ill in Washington. All but the first eighty pages of the book deal with this period. It is characteristic of Dr. White's whole philosophy and world-view that he calls this book the autobiography of a purpose, which most men would call the autobiography of a career. For Dr. White was a convinced evolutionist and Spencerian, who says of himself that the most important determining factor of his life was the date of his birth, January 24, 1870. He was born of old American stock in Brooklyn not far from a medical school, and very early in his life developed an interest in medicine, which he permitted to fructuate. In 1892 he entered the state service, working at Binghamton State Hospital for the mentally ill, and remaining there until his appointment to St. Elizabeth's in 1903.

These eleven years of intimate work with the psychotic, Dr. White describes as the "origin and early expressions of purpose." The books that influenced him most he gives as Spencer's "First Principles," Mitchell's "Evolution and Dissolution and the Science of Medicine," which he tells us was an attempt to deal with the subject of human pathology along the lines of Spencer's law of evolution and dissolution, Mercier's "The Nervous System and the Mind," and Buckle's "History of Civilization"—a list that reveals a good deal concerning Dr. White. At Binghamton, too, he began his friendship with Dr. Smith Ely Jelliffe, the great bibliophile and savant, from whom he was to learn so much, and who was to be his co-author and co-editor.

In 1903, Dr. White began his work at St. Elizabeth's, and found himself catapulted into the blueprints of the hospital that was just beginning to expand. Dr. White became an administrator and immediately revealed his high competence in this regard, mastering all the practical details, which ranged from kitchen problems to congressional investigating committees. He built up a great hospital with a population of 7500 souls. His true greatness as a leader appears in his attitude to his staff. A physician working at St. Elizabeth's was never made to subscribe to any system of thought, nor any current dogma, but was given the most genuine permission and assistance to find himself and work out research problems that interested him.

Dr. White's catholic spirit found room in his hospital for the most various and even divergent views.

In his psychiatric thinking and writing, of which there is a vast quantity, no less than in his philosophy and in his administration, Dr. White may be said to have occupied himself with large universals. The idea that mental functioning is the functioning of the organism as a whole immediately appealed to him. The special problems that interested him, too, were such large social ones as the sources of crime and its rational social treatment. Characteristically he reveals his views by telling of his activity, describing his behavior as a witness, and telling what he had to say about individual criminals.

Dr. White's career covered almost exactly the whole period of modern psychiatry, which roughly may be said to have started with the introduction of the Kraepelinian classification of mental disorders in 1896. Hence, all those who are interested in learning how modern psychiatry influenced a man who was in the midst of the field in the thick of the problems involved, and how this man in turn influenced the development of psychiatry, will find Dr. White's autobiography most meaty reading.

Disciples of Keynes

MODERN MONEY. By Myra Curtis and Hugh Townshend. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1938. \$2.50.

THIS book is an Americanized version of an English effort to make the monetary theories of John Maynard Keynes understandable to the general reader. It seems fitting that something should be done to bring the views of this British economist to the attention of a wider circle of Americans, since their interests have been more directly affected by the Keynes doctrines than have those of any other people. Mr. Keynes is generally regarded as responsible for the conversion of the New Deal to the idea that economic recovery can be best achieved by colossal expenditures by the government. Hence "pump-priming," which we still have with us.

While it is desirable that the American people should understand what, as Henry Ford says, has been put over on them, they will not find it out from this treatise on "modern" money. Its authors have produced a bit of skillful propaganda against generally accepted monetary ideas, but many of their views are far from modern. Their assumption, for example, that coinage gets its value from being legal tender, and that money does not really need gold as a backing, belongs to remote antiquity and has been productive of no end of mischief. More modern is the assumption that national income may be so greatly increased by government spending that the new outlays are not in fact burdensome; but the experience of the United States with this policy during the past five years can hardly be called a conspicuous success. The book, in brief, belongs to that "new school" of economic writings which are usually distinguished for their ignorance of past experience and their rejection of accepted views, not because they have been proved wrong but because they have been accepted.

Fortune on Shipping

OUR SHIPS: An Analysis of the United States Merchant Marine. By the Editors of Fortune. New York: Oxford University Press. 1938. \$2.75.

Reviewed by
COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

OUR mechanistic society has at last got round to the conveyor belt method of writing books and "Our Ships" is the result. Here is the finished product from the hands of the Editors of Fortune, whom one can visualize, like mechanics on a Ford assembly line, feverishly keeping pace as the book goes by them at a predetermined speed, hastily bolting together chapters seized from the sub-assembly racks before the main thesis is relentlessly conveyed beyond their reach.

The finished job as a book is poor, going to prove that magazine editors as a group had better stick to meeting their deadlines, and leave the writing of serious books to those who can take the time fully to study their subjects, digest their materials, and finally present to the reader a fully rounded treatment.

"Our Ships" has everything in it—just like the garbage can, and quite as neatly arranged and as invitingly presented. Tossed in among others are a chapter on Joseph Kennedy (late chairman of the Maritime Commission), several on Hog Island and the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation, one on subsidies, one on American ports, one each on the Matson and American Export lines, a passionate chapter on passenger conduct labeled "Six Days at Sea," some data on costs of ship operation, and several chapters designed to throw light on seamen and union leaders.

As a picture of our merchant marine and its problems, "Our Ships" can be considered hardly more than a caricature. Regardless of which anonymous editor is temporarily manning the searchlight in this weird book, illumination falls only on the bizarre, with the result that the reader gets a dazed impression that the American merchant marine is operated by confidence men bent only on swindling the government on subsidies; its passengers are mainly sex-starved females and exhibitionistic males; its crews (continually maltreated by scoundrelly shipowners) are composed of thugs, whore-mongers, and bruisers with whom no decent traveler would knowingly wish to go to sea; and its marine labor union leaders (the left wing

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 219)

ABRAHAM COWLEY:
"OF GREATNESS."

No greatness can be satisfied or contented with itself. At last it is in very great danger of breaking its neck downwards, but in no possibility of ascending upwards into the seat of tranquillity above the moon.