

is a work of popularization in the best sense of the word; it is indeed a model of that difficult combination: breadth of knowledge and direct presentation.

While thus unhesitatingly recommending the book, I must add on a plane of "higher criticism" some slight objections of detail. First, why does Mr. Seligmann persist in making sport of Gobineau? He was a great writer, read by few in his own day or ours. His "Inequality of Races" is the least of his works, and it is, oddly enough, not aimed at what we now call racialism. His views on the subject are to his literary worth what Sir Thomas Browne's views on snake-bite are to his, so that if we go on damning Gobineau as a racist, we shall only give ourselves the trouble of exhuming him again for his merits at a later date.

In the second place, I question whether it is quite consistent in Mr. Seligmann to explain racialism as an historical and cultural product, and at the same time to attack contemporary German racialists as if some personal devilry lay behind their views. It seems to weaken the demonstration. And, lastly, I wonder whether in treating of hybrids and the "interracialism" of culture, Mr. Seligmann has sufficiently stressed the fact that he is combating, not a doctrine of race superiority or race purity, but just race.

Jacques Barzun is the author of "Race; a Study in Modern Superstition."

The Thunderer at Its Zenith

THE HISTORY OF THE TIMES. Vol. 2.
The Tradition Established: 1841-1884.
New York: The Macmillan Co. 1939. \$5.

Reviewed by RICHARD ALDINGTON

IN accordance with "established tradition," this second volume of the history of *The Times* (London) by members of the staff is published anonymously. This strict discipline—the subjection of all its writers to the interests of the paper, this ban on any individual recognition—is only one of the reasons for its power over British public opinion in the last century, a power which to some extent it has regained during the past fifteen years. (It was *The Times* which led the attack on Edward VIII.)

The epoch, 1841-84, was that of the paper's greatest influence; and, towards the end, of its decline. It is a mistake to think that this influence existed because *The Times* was a Government journal. True, in those easy-going days it was possible for Delane, its editor, to be in close touch with Cabinet Ministers and to pick up important news from them in advance of other papers. But such was its power that Ministers rather courted *The Times* than *The Times* Ministers. Though Conserva-

tive and anti-democratic, it was far from being the servile mouthpiece of the Government. It never hesitated to attack Government policy and personalities or the Court. During one election it came out heartily for the Liberals. It was long a bitter enemy of Palmerston. The Queen and the Prince Consort hated it, like many of the aristocracy; and would have loved to see it curbed or suppressed.

The fact is that *The Times* owed its great success to purely journalistic virtues—its excellent news service (for those days) and the high conception which Delane and John Walter III (its proprietor) had of its functions. The public knew that no pains or expense were spared to get accurate news as quickly as possible, and also knew that Delane could not be intimidated or bribed out of publishing what he believed to be the truth. The exposures of British military incompetence and hospital scandals during the Crimean War were widely denounced as unpatriotic, as "helping the enemy," as a mortal blow to British prestige. Delane and Russell (his war correspondent) stuck to their guns, eventually proved they were right, and the Government was swept away by the blast of public anger they had aroused. And that is not the whole story. In practically every branch of news-gathering *The Times* was ahead of its rivals. Its commercial and financial news, for instance, was so complete and so reliable that every business man in the country had to read it. And it made some grand scoops. One of the most spectacular was printing the treaty of Berlin at the very moment it was being signed.

This privileged position did not and could not last. The abolition of the stamp duty on newspapers achieved its object of curbing *The Times* by opening the way to new and democratic papers which appealed to the masses, and soon beat *The Times* both in circulation and in efficiency. One of its worst blunders was its attitude towards the War between the States—a truly appalling display of British insularity and complacency. And its reporting of the Franco-Prussian War was just rotten. Nor is there any evidence in this history to show that *The Times* was even aware of the dreadful exploitation and conditions of the working class. It was always the newspaper of the well-to-do. But times were changing even though *The Times* didn't know it. With the illness and death of Delane and the appointment of Chenery the paper was living on its past prestige. The Thunderer was reduced to feeble creptation. For revival it had to await another epoch and another editor.

Richard Aldington, well-known English novelist, poet, and critic, is now making his home in this country.

An English Eccentric

MADCAP'S PROGRESS. *The Life of the Eccentric Regency Sportsman, John Mytton.* By Richard Darwall. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1939. \$4.50.

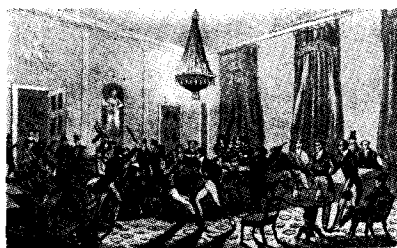
Reviewed by C. D. ABBOTT

MISS EDITH SITWELL, whose fancy for the grotesqueries of life has led her into many pleasant by-ways, first introduced John Mytton to a modern audience. She included him in her gallery of "English Eccentrics," where his strange and boisterous career is sketched with tantalizing brevity. A personage of such peculiar genius demands a more detailed presentation than the scope of Miss Sitwell's book would permit. Exquisite as her vignette is, it cries for amplification, and Mr. Darwall has answered the cry with this admirably complete biography, which not only retells all that "Nimrod," Mytton's close friend, first divulged in his breathless volume of 1837, but also incorporates into

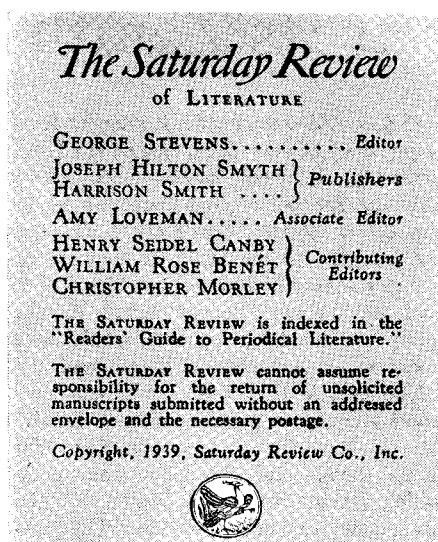
the narrative many hitherto uncollected episodes from the madcap's fantastic progress and a small collection of freshly discovered and very illuminating letters.

What Shakespeare was to poets, Raphael or Rubens to painters, Bach to composers, John Mytton was to sportsmen—a man of unpredictable and miraculous deeds. He was a genius of dare-devilry. Who but he, clothed only in nightshirt, would have stalked wild fowl over the frozen pond? Who but he could have ridden a ferocious she-bear into the midst of a dinner party, and what matter if the exasperated beast did bury her teeth in his calf? But perhaps his crowning feat lay outside the realm of pure sport: he suffered from hic-

cups and, knowing that only fear could banish the ailment, he frightened them away by setting fire to his nightdress. His native Shropshire loved and feared him, and remembers still his achievements, legendary and real. We can thank Mr. Darwall's industry for the pleasure of meeting him vicariously.



Engraving by Alken
John Mytton in a "Hell"



Announcement

THE owners and editors of *The Saturday Review of Literature* are pleased to announce that with this issue the magazine passes under new directorship, and will henceforth be published by Joseph Hilton Smyth and Harrison Smith.

During the past year Joseph Hilton Smyth has acquired three other distinguished literary properties: *The Living Age*, *North American Review*, and *Current History*. Mr. Harrison Smith is an associate editor of these magazines, as well as a partner with Mr. Smyth in the firm of Harrison-Hilton Books, Inc.

The North American Review was founded in 1815 by William Tudor; *The Living Age* by E. Littell in 1844 as the continuation of Littell's "Museum of Foreign Literature"; *Current History* was founded by *The New York Times* during the world war. *The Saturday Review of Literature* will be the youngest of this distinguished group.

The same board of editors now on its masthead, with the exception of George Stevens who became associated with the magazine in 1933, has been with *The Saturday Review of Literature* since its first issue in 1924. Mr. Stevens will remain as editor, with the same editorial board as at present, and the same editorial policies will be continued.

Noble A. Cathcart has resigned as president and treasurer of the Saturday Review Company, Inc. After May 1 Mr. Cathcart will be with the Crowell Publishing Company, publishers of *Collier's*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *The American Magazine*, and *The Country Home Magazine*.

Slicks and Books

IT is undoubtedly a fact that most popular fiction is not literature. The ephemeral quality of the great majority of stories and novels written for the slick market is a familiar phenomenon, so familiar that we should think everybody would be tired of hearing about it. (In any case, it is hardly surprising, considering the ephemeral quality of most stories and novels written for the sake of art; but somehow this does not grieve the highbrows like writing for money.) However, what is more irritating is a corollary assumption, that what is popular cannot be much good.

A certain amount of irrelevant criticism, proceeding from this assumption, is being directed at J. P. Marquand's novel, "Wickford Point." Some reviewers seem to be bothered by the fact that a condensed version of "Wickford Point" ran in *The Saturday Evening Post*. In fact, there are two conflicting criticisms: one, that "Wickford Point" cannot amount to much, since part of it was a successful serial; the other, that "Wickford Point" is an important novel which was brutally maimed in the serial version.

Thus we find Mr. T. S. Matthews (who regularly reviews books for *Time*) writing of "Wickford Point" in *The New Republic*:

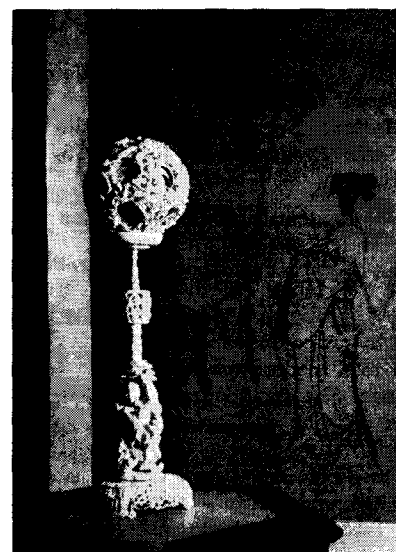
If you think you've already read this story in *The Saturday Evening Post*, you'd better take a look at the book. Those old *Post* editors are mighty scared of their readers. And they did a lot of cutting. The bowdlerized version of "Wickford Point" that *The Post* printed was 80,000 words shorter, and left out one of the principal characters because she was the hero's mistress. . . . That half [Mr. Marquand's] effort has been censored out of all knowledge, he has only himself to blame. For if he knows anything, he knows . . . the laws of the swineherd editors who feed the public trough.

Some of this, particularly the peroration, comes under the heading of hard words. It might be interesting to pursue the implications of a point of view which regards the popular reading public as pigs. Is this point of view consistent—for example—with a belief in political democracy? Can the public be trusted to behave intelligently as voters if they behave like pigs as readers? We can see nothing but confusion and disaster in the attempt to resolve this anomaly, and we return to the literary part of the discussion—specifically, to "Wickford Point."

We enjoyed "Wickford Point" immensely; we regard it as the most distinguished social satire to be produced in the United States since, anyway, "The Late George Apley." We do not, however, regard every word of it as inspired, and if we have any criticism—as indeed we have—it is that "Wickford Point" is too long. Having read it in book form, we see no sacrilege in the appearance of a condensed version—so long as the uncut

version exists and is readily available. The fact that *The Saturday Evening Post* omitted the sections involving Patricia Leighton, the narrator's girl friend, does not seem to us to come under the head of censorship. When the Hays office cuts a movie, you cannot go to see the portion that was cut; but any *S.E.P.* reader is free to walk into the nearest library and read all about Patricia Leighton. Not that he has missed very much if he does not. For one thing, the scenes in which Patricia appears are moderate and decorous in flavor; for a more important thing, she is irrelevant to the main story.

The point we wish to make is that many novels are too long; that many novels would profit by intelligent editing. "Wickford Point" triumphs over its irrelevancies and its verbosity. But how many novels do not. There are too many of which we say, "This might be good if only it were shorter!" Editors in publishing houses constantly sweat blood over this very point; the work they have done in helping to make manuscripts manageable, readable, pointed, and significant will never be known. Of course they can make mistakes, but we have seldom if ever heard of a serious editorial mutilation in contemporary book publishing; and it is hardly conceivable that an editor could persuade the kind of author who knows what he is doing to cut a manuscript to its detriment. In any common-sense view, the elimination of padding, irrelevance, and occasional pointlessness is all to the good. Novels are not lyric poems.



The Chinese Sphere

By MARTHA BACON

I HAVE confused no issue now,
My pattern is full-wrought and clear,
Arched to precision of the bow,
Intricate as the Chinese sphere,

The seven orbs, starred, intertwined,
Separate and inseparable,
Are, as the many circled mind,
Cut to a curve irreparable.