

## Letters to the Editor: *Sheean's View of the English and Emerson's*

### Emerson on English Traits

SIR:—It has occurred to me that England and "English Traits," seen with Vincent Sheean from the top deck of the "13 Bus," have not changed much in the hundred odd years since Emerson's day. A check-up reveals that in 1833 Carlyle complained to Emerson of the "selfish abdication by public men of all that public persons should perform" and Emerson opined that "Truth in private life, untruth in public, marks these home-loving men. Their political conduct is not decided by general views, but by internal intrigues and personal and family interest. . . . They cannot readily see beyond England. English principles mean a primary regard to the interests of property." He believed they would not "fight for a point of honor nor a religious sentiment, nor any whim," but "offer to lay a hand on their day's wages, or their cows or rights in common, or their shops and they will fight to the Judgment." "Heavy fellows steeped in beer and fleshpots," he says further on, "they are hard of hearing and dim of sight. Their drowsy minds need to be flagellated by war and trade and politics and persecution. They cannot read a principle except by the light of fagots and of burning towns."

In re the flaws in their foreign policy observed by Mr. Sheean, Emerson says:—"Foreign policy in England, though ambitious and lavish of money, has not often been generous or just. It has a principal regard to the interest of trade, checked however by the aristocratic bias of the ambassador, which usually puts him in sympathy with the continental courts. It sanctioned the partition of Poland, it betrayed Genoa, Sicily, Parga, Greece, Turkey, Rome, and Hungary," to which list of crimes Mr. Sheean has added painful and bitter items.

Emerson did not wholly approve of the *Times* as it was in 1847, either, but "wishes he could add that this journal aspired to deserve the power it wields," and denies that the English press has a "high tone."

The only material change in "English Traits" seems to be that a hundred years ago, according to Emerson, "To pay their debts is their national point of honor."

M. M. OVERSTREET.

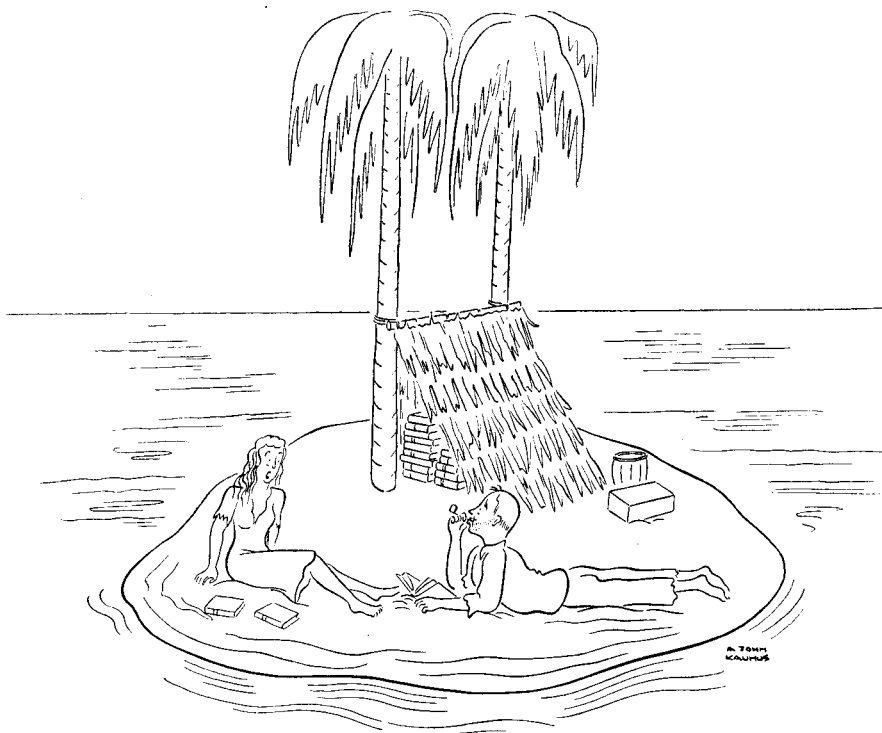
Sedalia, Mo.

### William Marion Reedy

SIR:—I am working upon a biography of William Marion Reedy, and am anxious to get in touch with his relatives, and people who knew him or worked with him on *Reedy's Mirror*. I would also like to contact people owning Reedy letters.

FORREST FRAZIER.

Huntsville, Mo.



"I just can't help thinking about the fines at that lending library."

### Where Is the Truth?

SIR:—If this controversy over "The Dark Wing" is not a purely private fight, and a mere outsider could edge in, might I venture the opinion that Mr. Cordell is slightly in error when he so airily lumps all Stringer novels as escape-fiction. "The Silver Poppy," which he cites as an example, is certainly not "in the romantic vein of Marion Crawford." "The Wine of Life" was assuredly of a realistic manner which might not have been altogether repugnant to the Faulkners and the Hemingways of today. And that the Stringer novel "Power" (a study of a ruthless railroad magnate) is of the genre of George Barr McCutcheon seems slightly contradicted by a review of that novel which appeared in the pages of *The Saturday Review of Literature* itself. I quote three sentences from it:

"It is a novel that sticks out head and shoulders above the ephemeral, fashionable stories of the day, chiefly because of its conception, its matured understanding and envisagement of life, its breadth and sureness of vision. The philosophy which underlies it reminds one somewhat of the attitude of a Thackeray: an understanding pity for the tragedy of human life, critical, even unsparing yet genial, in no wise impatient or angry, and always seeing things in their due proportions. The execution of the book is also masterly; a triumph of technique, both in its surface finish and its construction."

As the perplexed peddler asked of the barking dog which could still wag its tail: "Which end am I to believe?"

VICTOR LAURISTON.

Chatham, Ontario.

### Rome and the Frontier

SIR:—The *S.R.L.* for June 24 contains a letter from F. P. Noble which objects to Elmer Davis's interpretation of the vanishing Roman frontier, in his review of "The New Deal in Old Rome." The writer contends that the vanishing Roman frontier as a cause of the decline of Rome is over-emphasized and not consistent with historical fact. I cannot answer the charge directly, but I can suggest that the glories of Old Rome were to some extent a reflection of her frontier loot, and that the maintenance of the splendor of Rome depended somewhat on the existence of an ever larger lootable frontier. I am aware of the fact that there were existing regions and peoples never brought under Roman domination. Whether these areas were a possible frontier I am not quite certain. I agree that utilization and exploitation of the Roman frontier was a military accomplishment. I think, however, that it is not illogical to assume that there is a point in military conquest at which diminishing returns set in. I think it quite possible that the fall of Rome was caused in part by her loss of frontier.

F. B. HOFFMAN.

Olaa, Hawaii, T. H.

# The Scholar and His Library

BY R. D. JAMESON



The Congressional Library, Washington, D. C.

AMERICAN students of European literature, history, and all subjects for which printed or manuscript materials are needed now find themselves in a more favored position than their European colleagues. Instead of spending months in the unventilated, badly catalogued libraries of Europe, where the attendants more often than not take it as their duty to keep the books on the shelves and out of the hands of the student, the American scholar is now able to tap enormous resources which until recently have been difficult of access. He is able to do this in the peace of his study with all of his notes about him at a fraction of the expense which the European tour would cost. He can comfort himself with his pipe or cigarette and the thought that he is not spending his savings but actually continuing his salary.

All this has been brought about by a number of factors working together: mechanical developments, developments in communication, developments in library science. But without the great vision of Dr. Herbert Putnam, for forty years as Librarian of Congress, and now Librarian Emeritus, these striking mechanical developments would probably not have been put at the service of American scholars.

To the layman the most startling mechanical developments are in photostatics and microphotography. Experiments in photostatic reproduction have been in progress for many years. A photostatic copy is a photograph of the manuscript, map, or page taken directly on a sheet of sensitized paper. Although the Library of Congress supplies these reproductions at the actual cost of printing and postage, the cost for photostating—twenty cents a sheet and a sheet may reproduce one

or two pages, depending on the size of the page—is still too great to permit most private scholars to purchase more than a few hundred sheets for themselves. It is sufficiently low, however, to come within the resources of most libraries, and for some problems, the cost of photostated copies as compared with a trip abroad and, frequently, loss of salary, is very low. For example, when critical texts are to be prepared the first step is to get the relevant manuscripts copied. Until recently, if funds were insufficient to engage a professional copyist—and the fees of these people are high for not many steno-typists are able to decipher a monkish hand working in medieval Latin—it was necessary to go to the manuscripts themselves and spend laborious hours making a copy which can be no more reliable than the constant factor of error in all human undertakings. Now the factor of error is reduced by photography. The copies are at hand at all hours of the day and night. For the mechanical labor of copying the scholar can substitute meditation on his problem.

Micro-photography is a more recent mechanical achievement and offers yet greater possibilities. The development of this service is due largely to the efforts of a doctor in the United States Navy. Ships are not able to carry large libraries, yet frequently a life may be saved if the ship's doctor is able to get quickly the information he needs. If every medical book could be reduced in size from say 9" by 11" to 1" by 1", and in weight from several pounds to a few ounces . . . The answer to that was micro-photography. Apparatus has been devised to photograph books rapidly and sharply, and other apparatus to project negatives for easy reading. The ship's doctor can now store several thousand

of these capsules in his own quarters. He can have ready access to a larger library than is to be found in a number of the smaller hospitals ashore. The cost, negligible as compared to the cost of scientific or out-of-print books, depends on the size of the page to be photographed and runs between two cents a page for large pages or a cent a page where two pages can be photographed with one exposure. Most libraries are equipped with facilities for micro-photography and with reading apparatus. The reading apparatus itself is not beyond the resources of most scholars. A photographic edition of any rare two hundred page book which would sell on the market for thousands of dollars can now be purchased by an American scholar or his research library for two to four dollars. (This is less than the cost of a bad detective story.)

Micro-photography is very new. In the 1920's it was the dream of a few enthusiasts; even now librarians are apt to begin their accounts of it with expressions of amazement. The greatest developments have been in the last four years and the prospects for next year are even greater.

A number of types of reading apparatus are on the market. Their costs vary as do their efficiency. The cost of a binocular apparatus is comparatively low but with this type the eyes are strained and the arm begins to ache after an hour or so. The apparatus at present used by the Library of Congress is a large box. In the front is a piece of glazed glass 14" by 18" on which the image, increased by ten to twenty-five diameters, can be thrown. If one's tastes lie that way or the problem requires it and copyright agreements do not intervene, this glass can be used to make photographic reproductions.