

has done that he tells all in a single debate with Douglas. In it the author epitomizes all that Lincoln stands for up to that time, shows in a most satisfying manner that he is prepared to cope with this major problem of his life and of the nation's life—henceforth indissolubly linked. Lincoln convinced the American people then—and he convinces us now; Mr. Sherwood's version of the Lincoln message of 1858 and 1860 is so genuine and real that the reader forgets time and place and is ready to applaud the sentiment and the conclusion which the author puts into Lincoln's mouth in this, of all years, which is troubled with so many similar problems.

Tea with Lemon

THE ADVENTURE OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMIN. By Sylvia Thompson. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1939. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FRANCES WOODWARD

SYLVIA THOMPSON, grown mellow with time, presents no problem in "The Adventure of Christopher Columin" except that of entertaining the reader. Unless it is fair to count as a problem the difficulty which this reader, at least, found in hitting on a proper pronunciation for the hero's surname.

Christopher is a middle-aged American whose wife is all for the cultural life as pursued in Green Plains, Mass. And Christopher, in the tradition of two or three rather more distinguished literary figures before him, runs away from it all. He is rich, and thus runs in considerable style—via the *Queen Mary* and the Channel planes. He advertises for, and finds, delightful English relatives. He writes to a mythical French relative who turns out to be even more delightful. He visits them all, and loves it. Considering the relatives already known to us personally, it would seem sheer lunacy to look for more. However, we are not, and alas never will be, the hero of a light English novel.

There are two agreeable English children to whom Christopher plays Fairy Bountiful. Sabrina, in Miss Thompson's nice phrase, "seems one moment like a flower, the next like a puppy," and is also prone to recite verse—good verse, at that. There is Christopher's wife's lover, and the Countess Zaza, and the statue from the sea, and Venice, and the blue, blue coast of France. There is the cozy rectory, and lots of good food, and a reasonable supply of good talk, and everything turns out beautifully in the best of several worlds, for everyone concerned.

One of the characters, along toward the end, inquires if one lump of sugar is not enough for the second cup? Miss Thompson has managed to keep just within this formula, and "The Adventures of Christopher Columin" is a well bred cup of tea with about enough lemon. Not everyone's dish, maybe, but cheering in this gray February.

Unfinished Symphony

SONS OF THE PURITANS. By Don Marquis. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1939. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

FOR those who wish to know how stories end, and for those who believed in Don Marquis's genius, this book is a tragedy:—it is unfinished; the approaches to death caught him at the 308th page. But what pages in these 308! Here are all the familiar strands and strains of the Mid-Western novel: the boy growing up out of tune with his Philistine environment, the rival Protestant sects that rule the town, the girl with too much sex, the evangelist with the same trouble, the eccentrics good and bad, the conflict between explosive life on a new soil and the grip of Puritanism gone stale.

They are all there and they make the plot, but with this every resemblance to routine Mid-Western fiction ends, and



From the jacket of "Sons of Puritans"

only greater comparisons, with Mark Twain, with Booth Tarkington at his very best, occur to the reader. For "Sons of the Puritans" was to be a very fine novel indeed, an American classic, I think, and even as Volume I, "Youth,"—which is what Don Marquis has written—it is, I believe, of durable quality.

For into this story of mid-America Don Marquis has put his view of life, which is tragic, ironic, as well as affectionate. He was one of those humorists whose imagination runs in three dimensions, with depth always below his height. He is at his best in this book, and not only in a satire which is sometimes fierce, as in the episode when the rival pastors quarrel over their sinners; sometimes tolerant and wise, as when a female evangelist carries her surplus of religious energy over into a sexual experience; sometimes severe to cruelty, as in his account of the village liberal captured by the fanatics in his senility. Delightful characters wander through his novel, as quaintly fantastic as archy the cockroach—Mister Splain who said he had been an outlaw with Jesse James, Miss Paisley the mortuary poetess, Aunt Matilda who was created to make the world virtuous. And there is one terrible figure of tragedy—Billy Boyd, the drunken printer, who

killed himself to escape the kind of Puritanism this story is written to lift into a bad eminence.

No one who loved Don Marquis or who wishes to see what he could contribute to American literature should miss this novel. Let them write the end for themselves—there is enough life, love, humor, hate, and imagination in what was written to build a dozen conclusions upon. Don, as the appendix shows, had not made up his own mind how to end.

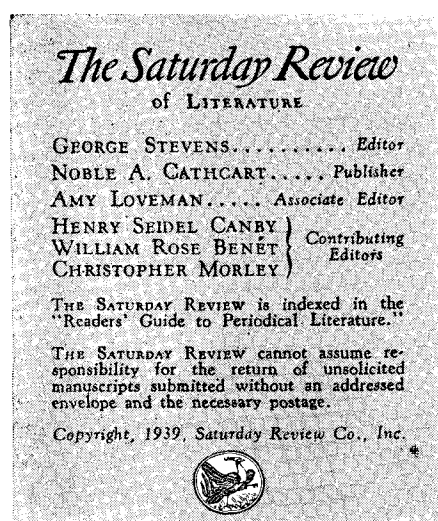
Life in Quebec

LUCIEN. By Vivian Parsons. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1939. \$2.50.

Reviewed by N. L. ROTHMAN

THIS novel is the latest recipient of the Avery Hopwood prize, awarded annually at the University of Michigan, and this is one of those satisfying instances in which the novel sheds as much honor upon the award as it receives. For "Lucien" ushers in a literary career evidently destined to be long and fruitful. By it Miss Vivian Parsons is revealed to be a writer endowed with most of the classic narrative talents: an easy, flexible prose style that leaves none of its traces upon the story, an understanding of the basic human emotions and the power to express them, a feel for the variety and differentiation of character, with the facility for illuminating this in the turn of a phrase, and above all the strong and dominating talent which can only be described as narrative facility. The story is the thing here, and one measure of her competence is the way in which the capacities catalogued so precisely above are fused to the vanishing point. You will read the story through to the end before you begin to think of the writing that has gone into it.

The book is set into a small city in Quebec. Lucien Charbonneau is a strong-willed and highly emotional girl whose life we follow from the aspirations of childhood to the frustrations and compromises of maturity. It is not a usual or a predictable life, for Miss Parsons has not needed to make use of any stock situations. There is the stamp of reality upon her people; they are fresh and vital, and as original as life itself. Lucien is loved by a young man too weak to save her from her father's cupidity. Her marriage to a rich farmer is arranged and consummated, and she finds herself at last impelled into this heartless arrangement by all those about her in whom she had trusted. Her development inside of this situation is the moving force of the book. The story of Lucien is so intertwined with other lives as to be, beyond its nature as a personal narrative, an evocative section of French-Canadian life, harsh, sentimental, traditional. Few first novels of recent years have offered such a thorough demonstration of distinctive ability.



Democratic Dilemma

MR. MUMFORD'S contribution* to the current literary barrage against fascism is stronger in its protasis than in its apodosis, more cogent in its whereases than in its be-it-resolveds. Even if men must act, it does not necessarily follow that they must act in a certain way; some of the worst blunders in human history have sprung from the hysterical conviction that something must be done.

But if one can see objections to the American foreign policy proposed by Mr. Mumford, there can be nothing but praise for his analysis of the reasons that compel us to have a foreign policy—and to have a good one, or else. He understands the nature of fascism considerably better than the optimists who think that if you keep on saying "Good doggie" and tossing them enough bones, the wolves will quiet down. Under a capitalist oligarchy, he observes, politics can be interpreted by economics; but in fascist motives "politics is the driving force, economics the rationalization." The argument that the have-not nations must be appeased is meaningless because nothing will appease them; "in order to maintain their doctrines and their party bureaucracy intact, they must increase their conquests and pyramid their claims." He is not much impressed by the complaint that the Treaty of Versailles drove the Germans to fascism; they would have made a worse treaty if they had won; and the worst thing about that one was the reparations, which they paid with borrowed money. "The fascist countries are no longer simply political states, they are states of mind"; and it is foolish to think that they can be checked by bankruptcy. A closed economy can laugh at technical bankruptcy so long as public morale is kept up, even if it is partly kept up by the concentration camp. No, the fascist states will not be stopped unless and until somebody stops them.

And who is going to stop them? Mr.

* *MEN MUST ACT.* By Lewis Mumford. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1939. \$1.50.

Mumford perceives something to which many American isolationists are only slowly awakening—that the Munich surrender undermined the basic presumptions of their creed. Classic isolationist doctrine was never better stated than by Mr. Hoover, with the enthusiasm of the convert, at Chicago on February 1st; but his whole argument hung on the postulates that England and France would resist Germany and Italy, even without the promise of American help, and that so resisting, they could win. Since Munich, neither of those points can be taken for granted.

"To coöperate with a Chamberlain," says Mr. Mumford, "is to invite upon our own heads a betrayal similar to that which Czechoslovakia encountered." Start coöperating, thinking you are coöperating to resist, and you may find that you are coöperating in a new appeasement, the cost of which will not be paid by England so long as anybody else has anything to pay with.

All this is a sound and accurate picture of the dilemma in which the President and the State Department now find themselves. They dare not refuse to coöperate with England and France, for fear England and France might then buy their way out by coöperating with Hitler; yet they dare not get themselves too deeply involved, remembering what happened to Benes, who trusted French promises and the British sense of fair play. It is a situation in which any private citizen might well thank God for privacy and impotence, content to let the constituted authorities find their way out. But Mr. Mumford is made of sterner stuff; he proposes that we promptly take our stand by unilateral action on a policy of complete non-intercourse with Germany, Italy, and Japan.

No more trade with them; get all our citizens out of those countries, and deport all their citizens from the United States; "liquidate as far as possible all short and long-term investments" (but surely the fascist governments could be depended on to do that liquidating for us); and "withdraw the privileges of citizenship from naturalized citizens who accept the fascist doctrine of dual allegiance." And what good would all this do? Well, the first and great thing is that it would stop the retreat—show the fascists that we are not afraid of them, and show other people too; "it would rally what is left of the forces of democracy in Europe, if they can be rallied at all"; it might even encourage the British to select some leader a little more viscerate than Mr. Chamberlain. And even if the fascists responded by declaring war on us, they are all too busy just now to do us much harm.

So far one can go along with Mr. Mumford. Domestically, this policy would cause considerable local economic distress; but we could stand non-intercourse, he argues, better than any other country; and to compensate individuals and classes

who suffered from it, as New England merchants suffered without compensation under Jefferson's non-intercourse policy, would be cheaper than war. One can still go along with him, as a matter of economics; but in a democracy, this is a matter not only of what could be done, but of what you can persuade people ought to be done. Such a drastic step could be taken, voluntarily, only after the national emotion had been whipped up to such a peak as seems impossible unless you are actually going to war.

The practical difficulties, too, would be more considerable than Mr. Mumford realizes. How are you going to tell which naturalized citizens are good Americans and which are still Nazi Germans or Fascist Italians at heart? Just ask them, and believe their answers? Or set a lot of spies to watch them? Further, says Mr. Mumford, there are elements among us who are sympathetic to fascism; "up to a little while ago" most of the Catholic hierarchy could be counted among them, but now they have had a "belated change of heart." One would like to know where he finds the evidence for this optimism; still, he leaves the bishops aside, now; we don't need to worry about them. But there are industrial reactionaries who must be kept in their place by the maintenance of the Wagner Act; and a vigorous WPA program must be kept going, to save American workers from "that state of desperation which prompts men to accept the slavery of fascism."

We agree with Mr. Mumford that all that is an admirable program. Unfortunately most Republican politicians, and a good many Democrats, interpret last fall's elections as a mandate for quite different policies. Suppose we need to do all that, and they won't do it, how are you going to handle the deadlock? Mr. Mumford does not go into that; but in other details he seems ready for drastic measures. "It is imperative at once to disband all private armies, including extra-governmental cadet corps." (V.M.I. and Culver are to close their doors?) "Uniforms should be prohibited to all private bodies, except workers who need identification." Thus apparently the Boy Scouts and the G.A.R. will alike be liquidated, and the Shriner will wear his fez only at the risk of the concentration camp.

But this is not what Mumford means? Maybe not, but that is what his words imply, and if he starts picking and choosing and discriminating, enforcing the law only on some people and not on others, he is going to get into quite a lot of trouble. Also, wherever the laws of the United States and the Bill of Rights are suspended by local fascist organizations, as in Jersey City and lately in Louisiana, the President should be empowered to declare martial law in order to restore the processes of constitutional government.

Earlier in the book, Mr. Mumford declares himself against the cutting of Gor-