

abled him to succeed and he attempted every art except the important ones of war and government." This verdict may survive the now unanimous opinion of sounder scholars and duller writers—that the survival of the Roman Empire, however changed, and of the Mediterranean civilization, however debased, was largely due to the undiscouraged persistence of Gallienus in precisely those arts which Gibbon damned him for neglecting.

He was the last gentleman who became Emperor of Rome, and he had the insight to realize that the day of the gentleman was over. His own class had neither force nor ideas left, only pride and privileges; so he ruthlessly excluded it from power and left the way clear for promoted top sergeants, who know what they had to deal with and how to deal with it. Accordingly he was damned as a traitor to his class, which unfortunately happened to be the class that wrote the histories; and having the misfortune to live in a time of unexampled calamity, he was blamed for not averting what nobody could have averted, and whose effects no other man did as much as he to counteract.

He commenced the indispensable thorough reorganization of the army and the civil administration, which was later completed by men who had more time to give to it than he could ever find. He, not Claudius II who got the credit, really stopped the greatest and most dangerous of the Gothic invasions; he laid the foundation on which the roughneck energy of Aurelian and Probus could restore the unity of the Empire; he might have done that himself if treason had not cut him off just at the moment when for the first time in fifteen years things were beginning to break right.

He kept his head when all about him were losing theirs and blaming it on him; but unfortunately he happened to be far more intelligent and sophisticated than his biographers, or most of his contemporaries. Disasters that were accomplished facts, no longer to be prevented, he turned off with wisecracks that nobody around him had wit enough to understand; he wrote amorous poetry, rather in the mood of Hemingway and Hammett; when he could snatch an hour or two from his job, he liked to talk to Plotinus about the things it would be fun to do if he could ever get around to them. Accordingly he has been written down not only as a tyrant, but as a lazy dilettante, by men who might never have had a chance to learn the alphabet but for the undissuadable industry and courage of Gallienus.

Reading the true history of this great man, one feels like standing up and taking off the hat. Naomi Mitchison ought to write a novel about him.

A People in the Making

AMERICANS. By Emil Jordan. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1939. \$3.50.

Reviewed by RALPH HENRY GABRIEL

EMIL JORDAN'S book makes a contribution to that debate about the characteristics of nationalism which disturbs the middle period of the twentieth century. The philosophers of Nazi Germany, identifying nationality with race, have affirmed that the genius of the Reich resides in the pure German race. Mr. Jordan replies, in effect, that the genius of the Americas results from the fact that, since the beginning of human history, the Western hemisphere has been the home of many and varied



The Britons—drawing by E. A. Wilson

ethnic stocks. He insists that the most important word in American history is "immigration."

Immigration began in the distant, shadowy past when bands of Asiatics made their way across the Bering Strait or along the Aleutian Islands from the Old World to the New. They and their descendants, whom Columbus misnamed Indians, overran the Western hemisphere. Many tribes flourished. The Mayas and the Incas achieved brilliant civilizations. The Mound Builders evolved an elaborate culture in what is now the United States and then disappeared, leaving an archeological mystery. Mr. Jordan devotes one fourth of his book to pre-Columbian America.

From an expanding Europe migrants began crossing the Atlantic at the end of the fifteenth century. In the two succeeding centuries Spaniards, Portuguese, Frenchmen, and Englishmen were the most important im-

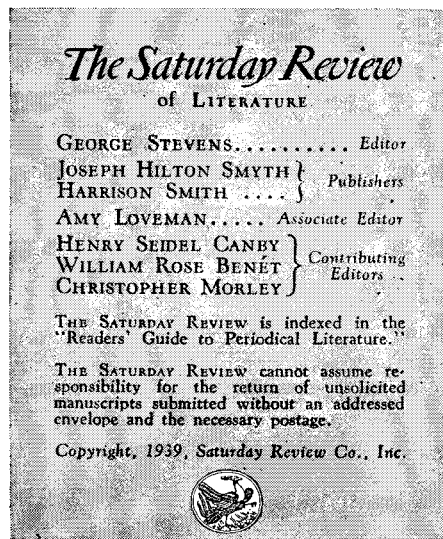
migrant stocks. Of these the Spaniards and the English established their mores in areas which together comprised most of the New World. Other ethnic stocks, such as the Dutch and Swedes, came from Europe to colonial America. Captured Negroes were brought by force from Africa. The nineteenth century saw the flow of outlanders into the Western hemisphere become a flood. Mr. Jordan has chapters on the Chinese, the German, the Irishman, the Scandinavian, the Italian, and the Jew. The book emphasizes immigration into South as well as into North America.

The author includes at the end of his volume a section which he calls, "Toward a New Human Type." He finds that ethnic confusion still prevails in Latin America. The Indian, whose culture has been but little changed as a result of contact with the Whites, still remains a factor of importance in the region south of the Rio Grande. In the mestizos of Mexico, the Brazilians, and the gauchos of the Argentine pampas new racial blends have appeared. In North America the elimination of the Indian has permitted the development of a greater homogeneity. Speaking primarily of the United States, Mr. Jordan raises the query:

Is an American race, physically speaking, in the making? This question can hardly be answered in the affirmative. . . . American uniformity is based not so much on community of blood as on a more binding and integrating element: the communion of a self-made civilization. . . .

Mr. Jordan's method of presentation is impressionism. His strokes are broad and his material slight. He aims at picturesqueness and scatters through his pages brief descriptions intended to suggest the characteristics of various racial groups. He deals only superficially with the anthropological problems which compose the core of his book. He has studied the literature available on the many subjects with which he deals and appends to his volume a useful reading list as a guide for the person who wishes to dig more deeply into the problems outlined in the book. He has fallen into an occasional error of fact and sometimes hazards generalizations of dubious soundness. The book on the whole, however, summarizes in an interesting manner the more significant conclusions of contemporary scholarship. Edward A. Wilson has contributed a series of fine full-page drawings.

Ralph Henry Gabriel is Professor of history at Yale.



Description Then and Now

A MODEST little book* has just appeared that is interesting not alone for its content but for its implications. It is a description of the fittings and customs of the Victorian home, and reading it one is aware how completely the minutiae of daily living of the Victorian era found portrayal in its literature. The present generation came too late to know at first hand the spatter work, the cattails, or the lambrequins, the twisted paper spills, the embroidered hassocks, and the ornate inkwells that decorated the living rooms of their grandparents; too late to stroll on lawns on which iron deer stood in ever-startled attention or stone dogs perpetually bayed the moon, or to share in the complicated ritual of the tea table, the custom of family prayers, and the interminable and elaborate banquets of the spacious Victorian home. But any reader, well-versed in Victorian fiction, is perfectly familiar with the routine of Victorian living and the paraphernalia of Victorian households. The novelists have seen to that. Writing for an age that was entering on that great industrial development which today has standardized equipment throughout the world but in which the privileged classes alone still enjoyed the material comforts and even conveniences that are now the possession of the humble, they were under compulsion to describe for the wide public a manner of life that many of their readers could never hope to know at first hand. Wealth divided the classes not only in social position but in fashions and customs and the only way through which the different sections of society could become acquainted with one another was through the medium of books. It was the novelist who taught Nellie at her sewing machine what the crystal-laden table of the plutocrat looked like

* *HOME: A Victorian Vignette.* By Robert Harling. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. \$1.50.

and Julia O'Grady how the Colonel's lady deported herself at a ball. As to what the poor were doing in their cottages, that the Victorian novelists very circumspcctly ignored as much as they could.

Our current fiction to a marked degree avoids the detailed description that was so important a part of Victorian literature. Naturally enough, for mass production has insured that the cook on her day out can wear a costume that differs from her mistress's only in the quality of its fabric and workmanship, and the movie has made familiar to the humblest housewife the furnishings and etiquette of the millionaire's home. The public has traveled a long road, indeed, since the early 1900s when an Ethel Thorneycraft Fowler could have her heroine, Isabel Carnaby, say that the problem of the proper fork to be used for the different courses at a fashionable party could be counted on as an unfailingly successful opening gambit for dinner-table conversation. Hollywood, supplemented by Emily Post and the popular magazine, has done its work so well that the movie producers of the present are forced to a most vigilant watch over the manner in which a dinner table is laid and a meal served lest the audience recognize and deride a lapse of convention.

The decline in the meticulous description of domestic arrangement and accoutrement is, to be sure, but another step in the elimination from literature of much that was once deemed essential to the proper setting of a story. It is now some considerable time since the novelists have ceased describing landscape at length, and increasingly the foreign city or even the distant home village is dismissed with brief portrayal. The prosperous world

has traveled too much, and the less fortunate been too assiduous in its attendance at the cinema, not to be able to fill in for itself in great part the background of the stories which it reads. The connotation of names is constantly expanding until the novelist has but to mention the Alps or the Forum for his readers to register a knowledge of their appearance that has all the accuracy that photography can supply and far more reality than the most inspired description of the writer could convey. Costume, cathedral, market place no longer need description, for they have all been seen.

And yet description is not dead. What has happened is that its focus and character have changed. If the novel of the upper classes no longer feels the necessity of depicting in detail the trappings of comfortable life, since they, at least vicariously, are known to all, the proletarian novel on the other hand finds no object too mean for portrayal. Again the novelist is acting as the interpreter of society to itself and projecting for one part of it the life of another. Only, since his description is now of scarcity instead of abundance, it is lean in comparison with that of his Victorian forbear. The shift of emphasis from one group to another is reflective, of course, of the change that has taken place in the social consciousness since the Victorian age as well as of the familiarity of the masses with the appurtenances of the more favored sections of the community. So generations of the future will know how the sharecropper lived as well as the millionaire, and if not quite as much of the outward seeming of our times lives on in the books of our day, at least a more rounded view of life will be gleaned from fiction.

A. L.

Of Old Sat Freedom on the Heights?

BY HILDEGARDE FLANNER

NOT she. Not freedom.
Not she, sublime and near the roaring stars.
Not she, caught pleated in museum stone.
She has the hero's eyes, the queenly spine,
Yet never poised her profile on a throne.

She proved herself of old, and still she does,
Sharp in the dirty bargains of despair:
And takes no chariots to great events
But goes on foot, and is not welcome there.

Calm when the cradle of our hope cries loud,
It is crescendo calm, that's history,
Till healing sweeps her sound on every sense,
A whisper, but the kind that drowns the sea.

Yet never conceive her as the warm consoler,
Baring her sterling bosoms for the crowd:
It takes a thinking man to reach her lap,
While all the feeble millions thirst aloud.