

## Horses and Men

"HOSS" DOCTOR. By R. J. Dinsmore.  
Boston: Waverly House. 1940. 311  
pp. \$2.75.

HORSES I HAVE KNOWN. By Will  
James. New York: Charles Scrib-  
ner's Sons. 1940. 280 pp. \$2.50

Reviewed by PHIL STONG

THE title of Dr. Dinsmore's book is possibly misleading, engaging as it is, for veterinary science concerns itself with a great many more animals than horses and this book is largely concerned with one of the most interesting animals of all, *homo sapiens*, particularly as represented by the Yankee farmer; not only the Yankee farmer bred out of his own soil but the Yankee farmer from Poland, Wall Street, Italy, Palm Beach, and Bar Harbor. There is almost as much about the mutts of Mrs. Allen B. Renfrew, 3rd, as there is about Caleb Rowe's "critters," and about as much of one owner as the other.

Dr. Dinsmore was educated at Harvard in the days when the prospective horse doctor was likely to take a fair proportion of his training from leading figures in the background medical sciences and the young vet's education was likely to be fundamentally as good as that of many a man who is operat-

ing or dosing on the polite stretches of Fifth Avenue today. Indeed, he was invited to stay in Harvard in basic research and teaching, but he had always wanted to doctor animals and the wary farmers of Sudbury, Mass., long suspicious of a Harvard college feller, finally let him.

The tone of the book is salty, thoughtful, and humorous. One of the first matters is indicative of things to come: when young Dinsmore had to run his father's livery stable he had some trouble with his horses' diets, because he never knew how much grazing his animals had been allowed to do when they were taken out by sparking couples.

The doctor points out the importance of veterinary science to human welfare—the tuberculosis measures of various governmental agencies have been well publicized but there are any number of diseases that the four-footed brethren can distribute, most of them remarkably unpleasant—rabies, anthrax, encephalomyelitis, and trichina are generally known, but there are a dozen other diseases, besides those we pride our own race on distributing, like typhoid, that can come out of meat, milk, and puppy dogs.

These are technical matters—the characters and incidents of the book furnish the greater part of a warm and engaging text.

Will James has done some, twenty volumes on horses, all quite as justifiably anthropomorphic as Dr. Dinsmore's interesting and valuable chapters on dogs. A betraying fact can be found in the author's illustrations—to put it cruelly, he is not much good on men but he is a crackerjack on horses.

The style of these sketches is the regular Will James-Will Rogers-cow-hand style, careless, colloquial, but forceful and amusingly imaginative. It is gusty and vigorous, of course. My idea of a perfect evening would be to have Mr. James and Ernest Miller, out at Elkhorn Ranch, in Bozeman, get together some evening and spill it.

There is no reason why any literary "ranahan" shouldn't enjoy these short pieces but I imagine its most enthusiastic audience will be youngsters up to sixteen or so.

### Cover Design

No less renowned an artist than E. McKnight Kauffer has designed the special cover for this issue. But for his work and influence in book illustration and advertising design, the degree of excellence reached in these fields would be materially lower. The Museum of Modern Art recently accorded him a one-man show.



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# THE NEW BOOKS

**THE MORAL BASIS OF DEMOCRACY.** By Eleanor Roosevelt. New York: Howell, Soskin & Co. 1940. 82 pp. \$1.50.

Reviewed by JACQUES BARZUN

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT's little book on democracy makes one conviction very clear which other American writers on the subject have tended to neglect. It asserts that democracy embodies a moral choice, and one grounded in the faith that Christ was right. Bernard Shaw, T. S. Eliot, and more recently Dorothy Sayers have been telling the English precisely the same thing: democracy is not a piece of machinery, and its present plight is not to be conjured away by merely repairing and refueling it. Democracy is a personal faith for which there are only moral and religious sanctions, or else sanctions which must be found in sentiments that are ultimately esthetic. If two people agree in hating poverty rather than the poor, disease rather than the sick, weakness rather than the weak, and cruelty rather than its victims, they need not argue whether they do so in virtue of a divine or a human command. They can for all democratic purposes be judged by the upshot of their thoughtful actions, and this practical test is peculiarly democratic in that it resolutely neglects the diverse motives and ideas that may and do lead to socially Christian behavior.

But Mrs. Roosevelt is fully aware of the wants which must first be satisfied before people can be said in any true sense to behave with a free will. As a sound stateswoman, she addresses herself to the youth of this country and shows them that a stake not merely in life, but in American democratic life, and a widespread sense of the obligations that go with it are the two needful things for the successful maintenance of our political constitution. Despair and cynicism are blood brothers, and unless their disintegrating power can be checked at the source, that is by economic and moral self-reform, it is useless to tinker with the outlying and ornamental parts of the organism.

In simple and persuasive words, Mrs. Roosevelt reminds the younger generation that self-sacrifice is not enough. Knowing how to live is much harder than knowing how to die. And here perhaps is a weak place in the author's argument, for she offers us history and Christ's life as the two guides for democratic living. But history—even the history of liberalism which she rehearses—predominantly shows practical effort without morality; and Christ's life shows morality with a deprecation of practical effort. We cannot imitate Christ in the sense of deserting our family and giving up work for preaching; nor can we rely on the mere past, which contains everything

from martyrdom to tyranny in equal doses. A past in which Lincoln was shot before Reconstruction and Wilson was deserted before peace was made is not inspiring. Since literal examples are misleading, the practical spirit of history and the ethical spirit of Christianity must first be extracted and fused into a living faith. But how many of us, bewildered and careworn as we may well be, are in a position to do it for ourselves? Leadership, as Mrs. Roosevelt asserts, is indispensable, but that leadership must not be content to haggle or even to fight with its antagonists. It must transcend and conquer them by the possession of a new idea, Christian and democratic, historically derived perhaps, but cut to fit a new world still struggling to be born alive.

**WEEP AND PREPARE.** By Raymond E. F. Larsson. New York: Coward-McCann. 1940. 168 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by LOUIS UNTERMAYER

MR. LARSSON has many techniques and many voices at his disposal. His new book, which ranges from agonized songs and despairing tracts for these times to Good Friday music and apostrophes To the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of God, proves him to be unusually Catholic in his allegiances. But, in spite of his fidelity to innovations in technique and ritual in religion, Mr. Larsson achieves styles rather than a style. His lines, even when they are most persuasive, somehow combine the acrid idiom of Pound, the suspended cadences of MacLeish, the dissonant juxtapositions of Eliot, and (occasionally) the tricky typography of Cummings. It scarcely requires an expert on "Information Please" to recognize the origins of "With an uneasy feeling / of disaster / left among the photographs / (so I suppose) / the rancid ashes of the hearth / and litter of delphinium / (or were they roses / were there roses in another room)" and "We have gone / to the windows. The wind / says in the arbours its names / with the way that leafscratch sounds on the paves / darker, more vast, more mightily a sound / than king's armour made against kings" and "death coughs / and at last coughs up the dawn / dawn / flaring with the smell of rains / and sudden leaves in drains / the nostrils of the sleepless ones who lie / wry and rigid in disordered beds" and "the Nails, the Nails pierced our the Flesh, the Hands, / the Nails, the Nai(our glasSES CRASHED / on the walls of that place)LS—"

To separate Mr. Larsson's voices from the voices of his familiars is not easy, and when it emerges it is still—although this is the author's third volume—no more than "promising." What it promises is further technical experi-

ment rather than a victorious struggle with material, a set of musical variations rather than intellectual convictions. The eleventh hour desperations, instead of being sharpened by his piety, are muffled by the five hundred line orchestrated oratorio which acts as finale to the volume. The title is as explanatory as it is significant. Here are the repeated warnings of destruction, death, and doom. But, in the midst of screaming bombs, it needs no ghost come from the grave to tell us this.

## ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. Jabez Wilson, in *The Red Headed League*, by Doyle.
2. Medusa, in Classical Mythology.
3. Della Young, in *The Gift of the Magi*, by O. Henry.
4. Sif, the wife of Thor, in Norse Mythology.
5. Belinda, in *The Rape of the Lock*, by Pope.
6. Absalom, in *II Samuel*, xiv and xviii.
7. Lady Godiva, in *Godiva*, by Tennyson.
8. Samson, in *Judges* xvi.
9. *The Prisoner of Chillon* (François de Bonivard), by Byron.
10. Melisande, in *Pelleas and Melisande*, by Maeterlinck.

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