

Eleven Men and a Lady

MEN OF WEALTH. By John T. Flynn.
New York: Simon & Schuster. 1941.
531 pp., with index. \$3.75.

Reviewed by PALMER HARMAN

MR. FLYNN'S stout volume of the lives of millionaires (eleven men graced by the presence of one lady, Hetty Green) is a remarkable piece of work. These portraits have vitality and meaning, notwithstanding that the rich man lost his halo some years ago and in his fallen condition has been little more than a target for debunkers and reformers. A fine structural unity is imparted to the book by beginning it with Jacob Fugger of Augsburg, born in 1459 (who in some respects was more truly a founder of the dynasty of wealth than were the Italian bankers), and ending it with J. Pierpont Morgan, who to all present appearances marked the end of an era.

Within these wide limits Mr. Flynn has achieved, by selection and treatment, a surprising variety. Who would have thought of including Robert Owen, the industrial reformer, except to raise the question what the world would have been like if Owen's ideas had prevailed? Jostling Owen is John Law, gambler and manipulator, whose wealth, like Owen's, slipped through his fingers, but whose ideas about credit have been built into the fabric of the modern financial world. The Rothschilds are here to show the technique of money-getting by lending to princes. Cecil Rhodes demonstrates the connection between private wealth and empire building. Basil Zaharoff is an exhibit on warmongering. Mark Hanna illustrates the morganatic marriage of money and politics.

Mark Hanna was singled out by Davenport, the cartoonist, who began picturing him in a checked suit covered with dollar signs. Davenport probably inaugurated a new phase in the popular attitude toward rich men. As long as criticism was directed against anonymous bloated bondholders, the tariff, Wall Street, the trusts, and other pale abstractions, the legendary virtues of "success" would not down, and reform was stalled.

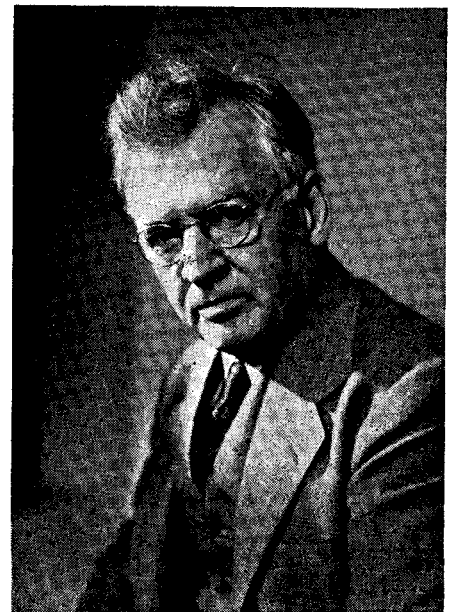
Davenport catered to and satisfied the human craving for a personal devil. For decades after Hanna's legal-tender garments had been laid away in moth-balls, the system he stood for enjoyed a riotous success. But anonymity was gone, the moral issue had been raised, and the American people, once confronted with a moral issue, never stop worrying about it until they have settled it, for better or for worse. The New Deal is a

moral crusade, and Mark Hanna and Davenport were among its instigators.

Mr. Flynn also is worried about morals. He senses the power and the occasional dignity of his heroes and he will not dismiss them with a smear. They were not saints, but were they merely exploiters and buccaneers? Did they make a contribution for what they managed to collect?

The author's answer to this question is far from satisfying. Wealth, he broadly hints, is created by men working with their hands, shaping materials by their skill. This, somehow, fails to account for Beethoven and Rembrandt, Bessemer and Edison. It also fails to account for John D. Rockefeller, for whom Mr. Flynn has a high regard. So the solution is a compromise. The men who concentrated on creating material things—railroads, textile mills, oil refineries—get a qualified bill of health. Those who manipulated stocks and bonds, titles to wealth created by others, get a full blast of Mr. Flynn's scorn.

That, however, does not end the



John T. Flynn

matter. If it did, this collection of sketches would lose much of its interest. If the financier is thrown out of politics, industry, empire building, and the security markets themselves, how will he "operate"? Or has he been thrown out?

Unfrosted Preacher

THE REVEREND BEN POOL. By Louis Paul. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 1941. 314 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BESS JONES

MR. PAUL writes with such a curious mixture of forthright raciness and downright literary pretentiousness, the reader unfamiliar with any of his other work is puzzled to know exactly what to think of him. Here he combines all the cynicism of the sentimentalist and all the sentimentality of the cynic. A homely young Presbyterian minister, given to platitudinous streaming consciousness, suddenly decided to leave his small church and go to New York City, where he thinks he may find the secret of something or at any rate feel more useful.

He wanders the street encountering all the clichés of urban literature—tired faces, Jews with racial memories, unshaven bums who touch him for a quarter, thinly clad prostitutes, undernourished bootblacks, and the shivering unemployed. They lead him to reflect with profoundly original insight that poverty and wealth walk side by side in a great city.

Is it parody, you ask yourself more in kindness than in amusement? Especially since the self-unfrosted preacher takes up lodgings in a "hall bed-

room" at four dollars and a half a week in the house of a lady with a rough exterior and a heart of gold. There in his own quiet and often misunderstood way he serves most of the other roomers, nearly all of them frustrated souls who cover up their real softness with tough talk and harsh judgments on each other. These include a brash salesman, very cynical, very embittered, who eventually befriends the odd meddler who came into their lives; a seventeen-year old girl who attempts suicide because she is pregnant, abandoned, and has embezzled two hundred dollars from her trusting employers to pay a quack doctor for some pills that did no good; a hard-boiled dame who says she ain't got no use for no man—no man, it turns out, but the preacher, who teaches her how useful a man really can be. And so on.

An almost fatal case of pneumonia, recovery through love and care, aided by a disillusioned doctor who takes dope, and a Christmas party with touching little presents bring the story to its climax, after which, several hundred pages having been covered, it appears that Ben's quest for his soul takes him back to Missouri. Everybody left behind is presumably better and wiser for the Love that has been shed on all.

Mr. Tate's "Radical Dualism"

REASON IN MADNESS. By Allen Tate. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1941. 230 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JACQUES BARZUN

MR. TATE'S latest collection of essays touches upon so many important questions of art, politics, philosophy, and criticism, and does it so deftly and delicately, that it is impossible to give a fair resumé of his position. His main contention is that the criticism of literature must give up the familiar and quite useless historicism of the schools, the sociologist, and the political critic. It must return to a consideration of form as the only manifestation of contents and it must accept literature as "the complete knowledge of man's experience." The new essay expounding this thesis begins with an epigraph from Pascal about certainty and ends with a sentence that amounts to an expansion of the Thinking Reed image; in the middle, Mr. Tate declares his point of view to be a radical dualism of matter and spirit.

Throughout the subsequent pages, the attack on what the author aptly calls the "demi-religion of positivism" is pursued to what seems to me complete victory. Both in his objections—particularly those bearing on semantics—and in his use of the opposite tradition of criticism, Mr. Tate shows that every "method" which reduces literature to something else, instead of taking it as an inexhaustible object of contemplation, is self-stultifying. But from this demonstration, Mr. Tate infers propositions that may in the long run be fully as dangerous to letters as positivism.

For although every kind of materialist reduction is absurd and inept, it does not follow that dualism is the right alternative. In fact, dualism strengthens the materialist by freely granting him a base of operations, by admitting that certain things are matter (*i. e.*, the universe) and others, spirit (*i. e.*, man's knowledge embodied in literature). And since embodiment implies matter, the "scientist" whom Mr. Tate fears and fulminates against, will endlessly resurrect himself from his own ashes and recapture the right of interpreting spirit from beneath.

Mr. Tate, I feel, would not commit this error if instead of taking pragmatism in its vulgar sense, he rightly understood the pragmatic analysis of experience and its role in the rehabilitation of spirit, art, and religion. Far from being a kind of positivism or materialism, pragmatism was historically the first revolt against nine-

teenth-century materialism. Knowing this, Mr. Tate would have been spared the mistaken "illustration" of pragmatism which he gives on page 196, and he would have recognized an excellent pragmatist in himself when he says: "Although a theory may not be 'true' it may make certain insights available for a while." And again, "Poets are practical men; they are interested in results." Were he to view art as a form of experience which cannot be exhausted by successive analyses, but about which a good many kinds of analysis can give "insight for a while," who knows but that Mr. Tate might not emerge as a pluralist and not a dualist, a disciple of Berkeley and William James, and not of T. E. Hulme?

Dualism, moreover, seems to have a narrowing effect on the critical sympathies. With its precise moral and religious dichotomies, it shackles the critic by suggesting at every turn a choice of either-or; a standard, not of fitness, but of correctness; a finality that kills. Mr. Tate, for example, speaks of literature as the *complete* knowledge of man's experience. How can it be complete unless the other arts are arbitrarily excluded from the category of knowledge? He repudiates the possibility of a full logical analysis of any poem and ridicules the academic assumption that a poem is "about" something—something that can be said in prose. Yet he destroys some of Hardy and a good pair of quatrains from Shelley in the name of logic, at the same time as he is forced to use "about" in quotation marks while discussing his own "Ode to the Confederate Dead." Mr. Tate is of



—From the painting by Marcella Comès
Allen Tate

course right, but he wants to be absolutely right.

Finally, the critical tone of these valuable pages is lacking in generosity. Granted that a critic must be a sceptic, he must not be a misanthrope. If indignant, he must be savage in his indignation, not superior. Yet though Mr. Tate hints at a number of real admirations, he more often chills us with tight-lipped understatements. He picks up an offending quotation with rubber gloves and a pair of tongs, denying all solidarity with his opponents. It is not surprising that he also denies solidarity with our middle-class civilization, imagining an aristocracy respectful of art in the past, and even preferring "frank barbarism"—also imaginary—wherever he thinks he has found it in the present.

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

Listed below are ten additional famous questions from famous poems. (Others appeared in the issue of March 1, 1941.) Again, you don't have to answer the questions; merely name the poets. Allowing 10 points for each correct answer, a score of 60 is par, 70 is good, 80 or better is excellent. Answers are on page 13.

1. Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?
2. And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
3. When shall we three meet again, in thunder, lightning, or in rain?
4. So daring in love, and so dauntless in war, have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?
5. By the long gray beard and glittering eye, now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
6. What shall I say, brave Adm'r'l, say, if we sight naught but seas at dawn?
7. Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
8. Are we not God's children both, thou, little sandpiper, and I?
9. A simple child, that lightly draws its breath, and feels its life in every limb, what should it know of death?
10. O father! I hear the church bells ring, O say, what may it be?