

the Phoenix Nest

BALLAD OF THE LOCUST EATERS

I'M sick of the schooner, Mother.
I'm sick of the sage-brush sea.
I'm sick of the waves of Ports-
mouth

Rolling in proper blue."

"Lie down in the wagon, Johnnie,
And let your troubles be;
Joseph Smith and the Mormon gods
Will take good care of you."

"I've plowed and planted, Mother,
And harvest should be near,
But terror sits my shoulder
For a drought is on the grain."
"Lie down and rest, my Johnnie,
Sleep and forget your fear;
Joseph Smith and the Mormon gods
Will send along the rain."

"Praise for the good rain, Mother!
The heads are blowing brown.
Our scythes will soon be cutting
The food for boy and man."
"But what is this?—this insect host,
This dark swarm settling down?
Now Gods of Mormon and Joseph
Smith
Befriend us if you can!"

"The end comes soon now, Mother.
The end comes soon and sad.
The locusts get the harvest
That we sweated to make be."
"But what is that, my Johnnie?
Has trouble driven me mad
That I see a shade on the waves of
wheat
That belongs on the Portsmouth sea?"

"A gull! A sea-gull, Mother!
Two thousand miles from sea!
No, you're not crazy, Mother.
And look! It's brought its mate."
"There's another! And another!
O Johnnie, fall on your knee,
And pray to the Gods of Joseph Smith
That it may not be too late!"

"They're coming in hundreds, Mother,
A wave of white, a flock.
(O, save the Mormons from dying,
Great Joseph Smith who died!)"
And now the wave is breaking
Like foam on a yellow rock,
And the click of beaks is like the suck
Of pebbles in the tide.

"They're rising again now, Mother,
(I hear the surf on the shore)
Going back to their native country
Which blows not yellow but blue."
"And since there is left no locust,
I think they will come no more,
For they've done the work that Joseph
Smith

Commanded them to do."

DOROTHY LEE RICHARDSON.

* * *

Miriam Allen DeFord (Mrs. Maynard Shipley) writes to me from San Francisco:

It might interest you (and Mr. Morley) to know that I was very well acquainted with Henry Frank, whose egregious "poetry" you published on June 22.

Frank's verse was atrocious, but he himself was an earnest worker in good causes. He was chairman of the San Diego branch of the Science League of America, of which my husband was president—the organization which did so much to fight the anti-evolution laws in the 1920's. In fact, the last time Maynard ever spoke in public, during his own last illness, was at a memorial meeting for Frank, who died in 1933.

I believe Frank, born a Jew, had been orphaned in early childhood and reared by a Christian family somewhere in New England. He became a Presbyterian minister, then by gradual stages lost his orthodoxy until he wound up as a Rationalist. His admiring friends gave him rather too good an idea of his literary talents, and like most very small men he was a bit pompous; but he really was a good public speaker and a sincere and hard-working liberal in several fields.

Incidentally, while I am writing, I hate to find fault with Betty Smith, whose work I like so much; but in her review of "Something Between," in the same number, she made a bad error. The title of the very fine mystery by Helen Eustis is "The Horizontal Man," not "The Lateral Man." For the sake of an unusually

well done mystery, will you have the correction made?

* * *

I am reminded by a correspondent who wishes to be nameless that, in an article I wrote of A. E. Housman, some time ago, I made the misstatement that the manuscript of "A Shropshire Lad" was in our Library of Congress. To set people right, Laurence Housman has himself stated that his brother gave the manuscript to his own college, and that the manuscript of "Last Poems" is in the Fitzwilliam Museum.

* * *

CAT SHOW

Lordly and langorous, opulent and proud,
The Persians stalk the brief length of their cage,
Resigned, disdainful of the doting crowd
Yet conscious as the actors on a stage.

The lustrous fur, the slanting golden eyes
Gleaming like jewels, arrogant and clear,
The shaded Silvers, shining Blacks and Reds,
The bored and languid champions are here.

Cages flaunt winning ribbons, blue or gold,
The cats, impatient, eager to go home,
Polish their paws, yawn daintily and stretch.
Behind each cage—the liver and the comb!

MARY ATWATER TAYLOR.

* * *

Macaulay was certainly no impartial historian, but in glancing over

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THEREBY HANGS A CORPSE Clarence Mullen (Mystery House: \$2.)	Corpse hanging in New York state cemetery with private-eye's card in pocket gets two sleuths in trouble.	Pugilists, racketeers, sultry dames, guys who say "aint'cha," tommyguns, and all that sort of stuff.	Cheap toughie
SPANISH BLOOD Raymond Chandler (World: 49¢.)	Collection of five "long-shorts" written in late 1930's. Mainly Western locale. Variety of sleuths.	Title story is about best of lot, but all will interest Chandler fans and readers who hone for gore and action.	Good and tough
STRANGER AT HOME George Sanders (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	Cal. dept. store owner returns home after 4 years' absence and finds 2 murders, also who it was almost slew him.	Arrogant Mike Vickers, three "friends," and detective Trehearne keep things moving speedily to not unexpected ending of cool, ironical, yarn.	Worth reading

the beginning of his "History of England" recently, I was struck by the pertinence of certain lines to what we might say of our own country today. For instance:

It will be seen that even what we justly account our chief blessings were not without alloy. It will be seen that the system which effectually secured our liberties against the encroachments of kingly power gave birth to a new class of abuses from which absolute monarchies [or totalitarian states, let us say! W. R. B.] are exempt. It will be seen that, in consequence partly of unwise interference, and partly of unwise neglect, the increase of wealth and the extension of trade produced, together with immense good, some evils from which poor and rude societies are free. . . . (Yet) those who compare the age on which their lot has fallen with a golden age which exists only in their imagination may talk of degeneracy and decay: but no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present.

It is always easy to remark that everything is going to the dogs, and today I find here and there among young people quite as disillusioned and disheartened views of the situation as, in the past, were supposed to be the sole prerogative of the aged. They wish a golden age right away; and a golden age never comes. They find man inclined to evil, to stupidity, to sloth, to hypocrisy; and their idealism sickens. They pin their confidence upon one particular religious, economic, or political faith, and then discover venality and folly among its exponents and corruption in its councils. Consequently everything is over, and the world is lost. But fortunately, the world is a lot tougher than that. It has survived seas of blood, the blackest of despotisms, the most tyrannical of governments, the greatest abuses of privilege, the most enormous greed of captains and kings, and, yes, of the multitude. It has survived man's baser nature which exists in us all and leads us into incredible inadequacies and idiocies. It has survived because man has an individual soul; because, once shown what is honest, what is just, and what is humane, he cannot but honor those things in the secret places of the heart, however much he may abjure and dishonor them in his daily life. That, at least, is what I believe. On every side today there are plenty of phenomena that might induce what is almost despair. But the toughness of our mortal constitution is what I bank on. It survives sensuality, misanthropy, colossal selfishness, and the wrangling of nations. For "the spirit of Man is the candle of the Lord."

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

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