

2790 Groveland

A HOUSE IN CHICAGO. By Olivia Howard Dunbar. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1947. 287 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by PAMELA TAYLOR

TWENTY-SEVEN ninety Groveland Avenue was a Chicago address well known, during the years from 1913 to 1928, to the innumerable literary figures who came to the three-story, red brick house as guests and returned again and again as friends. Harriet Tilden Moody, who raised hospitality and friendship to a creative art in this informal but delightfully comfortable home of hers, and whose full and varied life is told with great charm and appreciation in "A House in Chicago," was an extraordinary woman.

Born in Ohio in 1857, and brought up in Chicago in great luxury, Harriet Tilden's early life was secure. Beauty, popularity which would have been dazzling to a less well-balanced nature, and real intellectual ability made her years at boarding school, at Cornell, and as a Chicago debutante a record of easy successes. But an unhappy marriage, decided on at the cost of estrangement from her parents and terminated by divorce, brought the girl her first bitter taste of failure.

Upon her father's death the family found itself without income; unwilling that her mother should be deprived of any of the comforts which she required, the undaunted and resourceful young woman qualified for and began a successful career as an instructor in English literature in one of the Chicago high schools. At the same time she founded, using her own kitchen and such after-school hours as she could spare, a catering business which was to expand into an establishment which for years supplied Chicago's tables with really memorable delicacies and was eventually to include two highly successful restaurants and a London branch.

In 1899 she met the brilliant young poet William Vaughn Moody, who had come out from Harvard to teach English literature at the University of Chicago. Their marriage in 1908, begun in such happiness, was tragically ended in 1910 by the poet's untimely death.

Three years later Mrs. Moody, at the request of Harriet Monroe, received as a guest Rabindranath Tagore, then almost unknown in this country, and a lasting friendship began. Soon E. A. Robinson, Vachel

Lindsay, Ridgely Torrence, Padraic and Mary Colum, John Masefield, and Robert Frost were added to her group of devoted friends. Crippled for life by a severe fall which had injured her leg, she was obliged to give up teaching, but the ever-expanding catering business provided an income which she spent unstintingly on others, in unlimited hospitality in Chicago and at the remote Massachusetts farm which had been bought before Moody's death as a retreat and working place, in quiet benefactions and gifts. But more important, she gave, until her death, endless energy, effort, and time to furthering the development of the many poets who were included in her very wide circle of friends. While undoubtedly a tacit memorial to the beloved husband whom she had lost, this "Concern" (in the Quaker sense) was also a creative expression of her own personality.

The many letters quoted throw innumerable intimate and illuminating lights on some of the very distinguished writers of Mrs. Moody's day.

Rustic Retreat

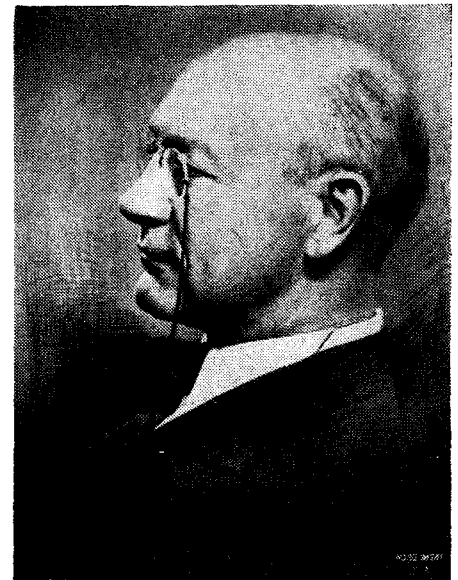
AN EXPLORER COMES HOME. By Roy Chapman Andrews. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1947. 288 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by
CATHERINE MEREDITH BROWN

AFTER many eventful years of exploration, of journeys into the dark corners of the earth, the distinguished Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews has looked homeward, embraced the hearth, and settled for serenity. Easing into dangerously loose-fitting slippers, he exudes the stringent satisfaction of the recently retired. His narrative, coated with contentment, points to only one possible pattern for living. Fortunately Mrs. Andrews shares this rustic enthusiasm. She, too, is willing to accept the world's envy.

After four years of directing the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. Andrews, in 1937, felt "like an animal in the zoo"; he was eager for fresh fields and possessed pastures. Colebrook, Connecticut, proved the answer. The farm was discovered, adored, and bought all in one day. The way was pointed. "An Explorer Comes Home" is quite simply an avowed affidavit in praise of the pastoral.

Originally intended only for week ends, "Pondwood" soon proved compelling enough so that year-round



—American Museum of Natural History.

Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews's "particular country living seems to breed . . . almost an isolationism in the face of history."

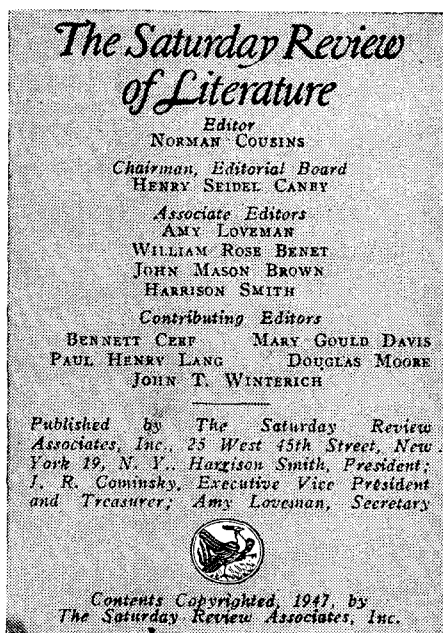
living, with regular visits to New York, became the order of the Andrews. Congenial neighbors, skiing, fishing, hunting for woodcock and duck, shooting, fill the time left free from writing, canning, and gardening. When aided by an eager colored couple, the mechanics of life present no problem.

Nor is there at any time even a threat of loneliness. Animal life supplies constant distraction. Lord Jitters, the Persian cat, Queen, the dog, and Poke-Poke, the kitten, make for good company. Dr. Andrews has the rather whimsical gift of being able to converse with his pets, and is apt to dissertate on jealousy, loyalty, love, and varying degrees of aptitude in this four-footed kingdom.

Now and again the explorer remembers, and we are catapulted from the lurking Thornton Burgess influence to the thrill of the Gobi Desert, to far-off India, to the lure of strange beasts and insects. These are welcome interludes; the spirit deserves a jolt; recollection must disturb the routine as the event of the outside world does not.

This particular country living seems to breed an armor against anxiety, a detachment, almost an isolationism in the face of history. Dr. Andrews's son piloted a plane, flew many missions, and returned in peace to "Pondwood." The cord, therefore, is there though one is seldom conscious of it.

Fundamentally, this is one man's meat, but it could be seasoned with a dash of humor, a touch of awareness, and less apathy.



Books by the Hundred

TWO YEARS ago a special committee of the Grolier Club of New York set about selecting one hundred influential American books printed before 1900. Their findings were announced in the spring of 1946 at a meeting of the club at which a spokesman for the committee explained and defended its choices; he was followed by a devil's advocate who attacked the selections as best he could, just as a court-appointed counsel will make out the best possible case for a murderer who has been caught in the act of unwinding a poker from his victim's skull. Actually the selections were admirable. Probably eighty or ninety of the hundred would have been chosen by any group as competently equipped for the job as was the Grolier Club committee. The other twenty, or ten, could be debated endlessly. For influence is a quality which is as difficult to assess as charm, inebriety, or courage.

Book lists, particularly in hundreds, are old hat—the Grolier Club itself, far back in 1902, nominated "One Hundred Books Famous in English Literature" (including American). In 1928, A. Edward Newton, bedeviled by inquiries about what books to collect, composed on behalf of unfortunate clients a roster of "One Hundred Good Novels" (not, as it is frequently miscalled, "The One Hundred Best Novels"). There are a hundred lists of best books, worst books, greatest books, least books, and books the mastery of which should be the equivalent of a college education.

Another list of one hundred books is now in process of selection, and the selecting agency is not a bookman's club or an authority on book-col-

lecting or an educational institution. It is a steamship company. The Moore-McCormack Lines will install in each of their three big Good Neighbor ships—the *Brazil*, the *Uruguay*, and the *Argentina*—memorial libraries each made up of one hundred books which "help explain America" (this in addition to the regular ships' libraries, which will be made up, presumably, of just the sort of books one likes most to read on a sea voyage). The men to be memorialized are three members of the company's staff who died while serving with the armed forces—Thomas Locke, Henry Olin Billings, and William Binder, Jr.

More than two thousand educators, authors, critics, editors, and statesmen have so far nominated books for these memorial libraries, and the final selection of one hundred will be made within the next few weeks. James F. Roche, director of public relations for Moore-McCormack, has made a preliminary announcement of favorite titles and authors which indicates that the final choices will be worthy of setting beside earlier notable hundreds. In requesting nominations, Mr. Roche asked for titles "which in your opinion would have helped the fellows about to give their lives to understand the country they served, its traditions and ideals, but most of all its people, the people who helped make present-day America." He was mindful of the fact that his company's three biggest passenger ships, converted into troopships, had carried half a million men to and from the war.

In the field of biography, Carl Sandburg's presentation of Lincoln's early life, "The Prairie Years," and Wil-

liam Allen White's autobiography have been the leaders to date. Stephen Vincent Benét's "John Brown's Body" heads the poetry division, followed by Whitman and Robert Frost. O. E. Rolvaag's "Giants in the Earth," the simple but moving story of a Norwegian family's struggle with the soil and climate of South Dakota, was first published twenty years ago, but Mr. Roche's correspondents have not forgotten it, for at the moment it heads his fiction schedule. Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" is doing satisfactorily among the plays. In the "certainly something by" group are Mark Twain, Thomas Wolfe, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, Edna Ferber, Hamlin Garland, Booker T. Washington, Ring Lardner, Harry Leon Wilson, Edward Eggleston, John Dos Passos, Ellen Glasgow. Certainly all of these writers have helped, or are still helping, to "explain America."

Broadly speaking, any book by an American helps explain America. So do a good many books by non-Americans. (Frances Trollope's "Domestic Manners of the Americans" may not help explain America, but it certainly helps explain Frances Trollope.) It is interesting to note that none of the nominees for the three memorial libraries is the work of an apologist or a propagandist. There isn't a flag-waver in the lot—on the contrary, some of the writers cited are extremely critical of their native land. All of them have written with integrity and detachment and with analytical objectiveness. It is heartening to note that the selectors themselves have approached their task with comparable objectivity.

J. T. W.

Song Before Dark

By I. L. Salomon

DAWK is the song of the wood thrush singing;
it falls from the thicket over the rise
in innocent and consummate pleading
contemplative as the day that dies;

and in the downland over the meadow
the echo is clear in the cooling air
as the dusk unfurls its prodigious shadow
leaving lonely phantoms everywhere;

nothing's disturbed; the telegraph wires
hum their efficient ambiguous tune
as the hilltop firs with their ragged spires
are as yet unfavored by the moon;

down from the upland the song returning
is woodwind piercing the wetted grain,
and the hungry heart with desire burning
is half-relieved of its hovering pain!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Werner Neuse Was First

SIR: I am sure you will be glad to correct a misstatement which occurs in your issue for Aug. 2. Following Philip Rahv's review of Paul Goodman's "Kafka's Prayer," you state that "Philip Rahv . . . wrote the first English language article on Kafka to appear in this country (*Kenyon Review* Jan. 1938)." In the summer 1935 number of *Books Abroad*, you will find an article on Franz Kafka, by Professor Werner Neuse of Middlebury College. I hope you will transfer the laurel.

R. T. HOUSE.

Norman, Okla.

Blurred Blur

SIR: In your issue of Aug. 2, Merle Miller's review of "Dark December," by R. E. Merriam was very discerning. However, he was somewhat misled by the publisher's blurb which suggests that "Dark December" actually is a distillation of an official five-volume report on the Ardennes campaign prepared by the Historical Division of the War Department.

At the end of the operations in Europe Mr. Merriam and a number of others were assigned, under my direction, to undertake a preliminary compilation of documents and information relating to the Ardennes. Redeployment ended this project before it could be completed, and as a result the Historical Division of the War Department Special Staff received five preliminary reports, based on an incomplete study of the available documents, and covering in detail only the period from 16 to 19 December. Some sectors of the gigantic front were covered up to the 28 December, but many of the more important phases of this campaign were left entirely untouched by our researchers. It was on this fragmentary and admittedly preliminary treatment that Mr. Merriam based "Dark December."

Your reviewer properly noted the uneven treatment accorded to certain phases of the campaign . . . the last three weeks is compressed and Mr. Merriam slights the operation on the southern flank. These gaps in "Dark December" are identical with those in the preliminary study done by the Historical Division. However, Mr. Miller erred in writing that Mr. Merriam had "the chance to study all the documents." The German documents, of which we have now a very complete collection, were not available to Mr. Merriam and he was forced to rely on a few interviews with German officers. Mr. Merriam did not see the documents from the higher American Headquarters, all of which have been opened to the Historical Division. Finally, no intensive and comprehensive study of the documents containing the history of all the American combat units which took part in the Ardennes has been attempted, and Mr. Merriam's own researches can be called exhaustive in the case of only one American unit, i.e., the 7th Armored Division.

"Dark December" is a valuable interim contribution to the history of a great campaign and I hope that it



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"Now don't try to fool this King Solomon—just tie him up on some technicality."

will be widely read. However, it is in no sense the last word on the Ardennes.

H. M. COLE,
Former Deputy Theater
Historian, USFET.

Washington, D. C.

It Doesn't Parse

SIR: That common-speech potpourri "Slaunchwise and Catawampus," of Horace Reynolds [*SRL* Aug. 23] was most delightful, but he would have hard work to prove that "where are you from outer," really, as he says, "piles up three prepositions where the schoolmarm says none ought to be." "Outer," (out of) is a prepositional phrase, with "out" as an adverb, plus the preposition "of." The practical "from out" (sometimes "from out of") is a similar phrase. The best case of multi-prepositional sentence ending is the complaint of the small boy, "What did you pick out that book for me to be read to out of for?" But that has three prepositions, not four.

BERNARD M. ALLEN.

Cheshire, Conn.

Rossetti Retitled

SIR: "Bystanders Are Not Innocent" [*SRL* Aug. 2], the title of your gallant article, might have stood over one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's beautiful sonnets, which I take the liberty of transcribing here:

ON REFUSAL OF AID BETWEEN NATIONS

Not that the earth is changing, O my God!
Nor that the seasons totter in their walk,—
Not that the virulent ill of act and talk
Seethes ever as a winepress ever trod,—

Not therefore are we certain that the rod
Weighs in thine hand to smite thy world; though now
Beneath thine hand so many nations bow,
So many kings:—not therefore, O my God!—
But because Man is parcelled out in men
To-day; because, for any wrongful blow,
No man not stricken asks, "I would be told
Why thou dost thus": but his heart whispers then,
"He is he, I am I," by this we know
That the earth falls asunder, being old.

PAUL SCHRECKER.

New York, N. Y.

Cosmic Defects

SIR: Professor Montague's criticism of the defects of the cosmos in the *SRL* Sept. 6 calls to mind the observation of that forthright thinker Miguel de Unamuno that in his generosity God not only created the cosmos but left man perfectly free to criticize his handiwork. What an anemic age we live in! With its Wellsian non-competent gods and like intellectual rabbits. Instinctively one turns to a Pascal who WAS a scientist and one of front rank, too, and whose declaration of faith said . . . "The God of Abraham and Isaac, NOT the God of the philosophers."

Or one recalls "The Heavens are telling . . ." wit hits robust (not rose-colored, Professor Montague, but robust) affirmation of BEING. In such words lies more meat than in a barrel of modern speculation.

G. R. GARRETT.

New York, N. Y.