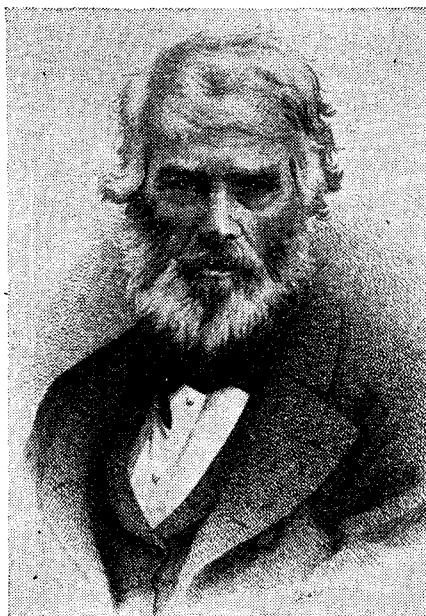


was his experience with masters and schoolboys at Marlow ("today an admirable institution") where he suffered physically and spiritually with quite as much severity as the hero of "Fortitude." "The excessive desire to be loved that has always played so enormous a part in my life was bred largely, I think, from the neglect I suffered there." It was at Marlow and as a consequence of these experiences that he first acquired his vision of Evil that was to make all his novels romantic efforts to show Absolute Evil pitted against Absolute Good rather than conflicts between Good-and-Evil and Evil-and-Good.

The marvel is that the boy emerged at all and from his neurosis created both the Hugh Walpole whom even the most distinguished of his contemporaries loved and the books that secured him a contemporary popularity only Fitzgerald in his heyday surpassed. At first the achievement of popularity (or even publication) seemed as impossible as being happy had at Marlow. His imagining of a "universal popularity" was not realized until he had written and published a great deal everyone agreed was awful; even when, after "Fortitude" appeared in 1913, he started his steady course toward becoming the "idol" American women swarmed over at lectures and whom all but the most sophisticated reviewers praised fulsomely, he could not forget his miserable beginnings or cease to fear that they would lead to a miserable end.

In his men friends, whom he worshiped this side of homosexuality, he was as fortunate as he is in Mr. Hart-Davis's brilliant account of the friendships he had with them. Henry



—Culver Service.

Carlyle—"lives by the art he despised."

James loved Walpole's gusto, the mask that protected his inner insecurity, lectured him gently, praised his early novels with discreet and oblique reserve. Conrad and Bennett spoke more openly for and against Walpole's too many novels, but they always loved the man himself. The younger generation of writers, most of whom he befriended after he became famous, loved his generosity and the man from whom it emanated even if they were more than a little skeptical of the quality of his work.

No one probably has ever had a more indiscriminating and enthusiastic love of all people and all things. A small author, a big sunset, an unknown man—he could love them all convincingly. Indeed, if one could make it sound complimentary rather than condescending, one would like to call him the perpetual child of modern literature (provided again one agrees with Wordsworth about childhood). Despite his occasional frets and fumes, despite his inability to discriminate adequately or to criticize severely, his amazing candor and lust for experience make both Hugh Walpole and the best of his fairy stories disguised as realistic novels (which means everything he wrote) an intermittent but still surviving delight.

His bid for long remembrance rests most securely in Mr. Hart-Davis's biography. Hugh Walpole he presents sympathetically, critically, and clearly. Read this biography and you will never again feel the security of a snob who despises the Rogue Herries novels too much to read them. Indeed, it is likely this biography will send you back to some of the novels and you will find them better than you were taught.

Strength in Strength

THOMAS CARLYLE: *The Life and Ideas of a Prophet*. By Julian Symonds. New York: Oxford University Press. 308 pp. \$3.50.

By GORDON N. RAY

AMONG the major desiderata of nineteenth-century studies today is a comprehensive examination of Thomas Carlyle which will place him in his intellectual milieu and determine the relevance of his thought to modern problems in the manner of Lionel Trilling's "Matthew Arnold" or Noel Annan's "Leslie Stephen." Much of the spade-work for this formidable task has been performed during the past twenty years by a succession of distinguished French and American scholars which includes Eric Bentley, Louis Cazamian, the late C. F. Harrold, Emery Neff, Hill Shine, A. C. Taylor, and Louise M. Young. During the same period the shifting kaleidoscope of contemporary history has emphasized the vitality of Carlyle's ideas by showing them in constantly changing perspective. In 1898 H. D. Traill, the editor of the Centenary Edition of Carlyle's "Works," argued that though Carlyle's day as a prophet and teacher was over, he was destined to remain "a great master of literature who lives for posterity by the art which he despised." Yet in 1932 Emery Neff, impressed by the excitement that Carlyle's writings were then arousing in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, inquired whether he might not have something important to tell to the democracies as well. "The great public is listening to writers who say incompletely and imperfectly what Carlyle said with unparalleled brilliance and cogency. If Victorian clouds do not shroud his lightnings, it may turn next to him." The Italian and German dictatorships have since gone down to defeat. In the United States we assure ourselves more confidently than in the 1930's that it can't happen here. But Russia has meanwhile developed a version of authoritarianism which binds half the world with a stringency that neither Mussolini nor Hitler ever achieved. It can hardly be said, therefore, that Carlyle's comprehension of power-politics, his understanding of the irrational and unconscious aspects of mass motivation, and his awareness of force as the root fact of social organization

Gordon N. Ray is editor of "The Letters and Private Papers of W. M. Thackeray."

Middlewestern Primary

By Christopher Morley

ON many of my best-loved authors
The mantle of invisibility
The coveted cloak of darkness
The privilege of secrecy
Has gently fallen:
Unknown, unread, unmentioned
They are content (as said Sir Thomas
Browne)
To be as if they had never been.

Once in a long long while
For loyalty to my faithful love
I mention some of them
But not in the faintest hope
Of diluting their hardwon poppy juice.
I wonder for instance if Harold Stassen
Ever read any of the noble essays
Written by O. W. Firkins
And published by
The University of Minnesota Press?

have lost their pertinence for modern readers.

Encouraged by Mr. Symons's subtitle, one turns to his "Thomas Carlyle" in the hope that he has attempted the synthesis we need. An initial sketch of Carlyle's position at the time of his address as rector of the University of Edinburgh in 1866, the effective end of his creative career, also promises well. But it soon becomes evident that Mr. Symons is not really interested in Carlyle's thought. His knowledge of nineteenth-century intellectual history is slight, and he displays little acquaintance with recent Carlylean scholarship. It almost seems, indeed, that he has rephrased for his own guidance a famous question of Sydney Smith's: who reads an American book about Carlyle? In view of these deficiencies in his equipment, it is not surprising that his last word hardly differs from Traill's judgment fifty-four years ago. Carlyle "rubbed the wrong lamps," we are told, "but he was a great magician."

Mr. Symons focuses his attention upon Carlyle as a person rather than as a thinker, and with this aspect of his subject he is fully competent to deal. Though his book cannot compare with "Necessary Evil" (the recent biography of Jane Welsh Carlyle, by Lawrence and Elizabeth Hanson) in respect to the new information that it provides, he at any rate retells the story of Carlyle's life pleasantly and expertly from the principal published sources. He treats the controversial issues raised by Carlyle's contorted personality sanely and sympathetically. He relates the usual anecdotes with a nice feeling for proportion, and he introduces the customary subordinate figures with a vivid sense of character. If one is surprised to find Fanny Kemble passing unrecognized as "a Mrs. Pierce Butler"; if one is disheartened to discover Carlyle's resounding dismissal of Herbert Spencer as "the most unending ass in Christendom" flattened to "an immeasurable ass," such lapses are infrequent and unimportant. For the most part Mr. Symons makes his way through the jungle of nineteenth-century social history with ease and adroitness.

At one point in his narrative Mr. Symons offers the reader a summary of "Sartor Resartus," remarking by way of excuse, "The book is so little read that a short account of it may be useful." He has here anticipated a fair verdict on his own work. For readers unacquainted with Carlyle, Mr. Symons provides an engaging first glimpse. For those already well versed in things Victorian, he presents little in the way of fact or interpretation that will not already be familiar.

The Peace Which Is Hard to Find

ALL I COULD NEVER BE. By Beverley Nichols. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 348 pp. \$4.

By R. ELLIS ROBERTS

MR. NICHOLS has been places and met people; unfortunately, if one may judge from this mixture of society gossip, local color, occasional heart-searchings, and autobiography, no one he ever meets interests him as much as does Beverley Nichols. That is all right for readers who enjoy watching Mr. Nichols in excited or admiring rapture at some new attitude. He is—and he admits that he is not yet adult—for all the world like a baby crawling on the floor and suddenly seeing himself in a mirror. Other things in the world interest Mr. Nichols, but it is his own reflection which fascinates him.

Some of his attitudes are as surprising as they are distasteful. In defending that deplorable and ungrateful novel "Evensong," which he wrote about Melba, in whose employment he had been, he writes: "It was inevitable, when Melba died, that I should write a novel about a prima donna. Not to have done so would have been a dereliction of my duty as an artist." As an artist, Mr. Nichols? Vanity of this kind is so simple-

rising above the gossip column. Mr. Nichols's inability ever to give more than a superficial view of the many people he has met is no doubt explained by his very odd standards of social intercourse. In writing of a well-known Edwardian hostess, who had told him stories about her friends, he says, "I would not have listened so attentively to the stories if I had not realized there was money in them."

The last third of the book, however, has more feeling, better taste, and deals not so lightly, even when it is gossipy, with people and events. The change comes when Mr. Nichols writes about his part in the pacifist movement (afterwards repudiated), his search for an escape from his childish secularism, his brief immersion in Buchmanism, and his pathetic attempts to appease the Nazis by giving Ribbentrop a luncheon party and being friendly with Otto von Bismarck. Even the style is not so infuriatingly arch (no longer has it such phrases as Mr. Otto Kahn "was, in short, a very considerable dear") and a certain gravity settles on this luckless man who seemed doomed in the earlier pages to remain perpetually "a bright young thing." In fact, while the earlier part of the book is as vulgar as were "Twenty-Five" and "Are They the Same at Home?," the later pages seem to be written at a different time by a different author.

Towards the end Mr. Nichols relates his adventures at the Olympic Games when they were held in Berlin. He was, through sheer carelessness—he was recovering from a severe nervous breakdown—the cause of the execution of a luckless anti-Nazi whom he had befriended. Without looking at it, he gave the youth a ticket he had received from Lord Burghley, head of the British delegation. He thought it was for standing-room; actually it was for a distinguished guest, and would have put this young man, who had already been in prison for his opinions, in a box just behind Hitler. The boy was arrested and shot the next morning. Mr. Nichols tells the story well. That carelessness of his seems a symbol of the world's attitude towards Nazism.

In these pages, as in the fantastic accounts of his interviews with Ribbentrop, the book rises to the level of really good reporting. It is still a
(Continued on page 31)



Beverley Nichols—"not yet adult."

minded as to be almost incredible. It should be mentioned, however, that Mr. Nichols writes that "the finest artists are cads all the time," although the lesser can be gentlemen on Mondays and cads on Tuesdays.

The first two hundred pages of this book are on this cheap level, rarely

R. Ellis Roberts at one time was literary editor of the *New Statesman* and *Time* and *Tide of London*.