

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE
EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

VOLUME II

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 1926

NUMBER 27

Books Are News

AN honest ham-sandwich is preferable to a badly cooked pâté, and straightforward news of books is better than half-baked criticism. The reason why so much book reviewing is unsatisfactory to every one but the reviewer is to be found in this simple statement. Reviewing may be criticism, and the reviewing in such a magazine as *The Saturday Review of Literature* emphasizes criticism, but reviewing, just because it deals with new books, must be news, and hence must be journalism. Newspaper reviewing especially is essentially journalism. By and large, and excepting obvious exceptions, it is bad journalism.

It is bad journalism because there is no general understanding that it is journalism at all. Reviewing is supposed to be "literary"; it is supposed to require, not training in journalism, not adroitness in grasping news values, not skill in presentation, but that vague "background" of culture and the love of books which is supposed to come with a college degree and a major course in English. But such a "background" is no adequate preparation for criticism, which asks for more strenuous endeavors, more breadth of knowledge, more acuteness of special insight than any profession except medicine in its most specialized varieties and some branches of law. Hence, if reviewing, and especially newspaper reviewing, is commissioned from book lovers who cannot be critics and are not journalists, the result will be what all are familiar with—sprawling "literary" reviews, feeble in their critical estimates, weak in perception, and entirely wanting in those qualities of precision, interest, and news which journalism requires.

Whatever else new books are they are news, and news of a character far more important than managing editors have recognized. Is it necessary to labor this point? The advance of science, the interpretation of politics, the satiric study of contemporary characters, ideas in poetry, new forms of beauty, authentic history—this is news, and first assembled, first made accessible in its maturity, in books. Scarcely a week passes between August and December, and between January and June, when there is not a full-length news story of real importance and great interest in a just published book.

But it takes a journalist to see this news, and to get this news, and to make this news *seem* news—and how many such journalists are there among the tens of thousands of reviewers—steady, casual, professional, amateur—in the United States?

This magazine has stood and will stand for better criticism, sounder criticism, more acute and more suggestive criticism. It is the function of a literary weekly to uphold criticism, scholarship, and literary perception. It is its duty to seek knowledge and wisdom and maturity of judgment, even if news sometimes suffers. But criticism is only the half, and probably should be only the third, of reviewing. This is a plea for journalistic reviewing. It is a plea for as much skill in presenting a book news-story as in narrating a murder news-story. It is a plea to editors of newspapers to give books a chance; to give them real journalists as reviewers instead of amateur critics with a shadowy background; to make reviewing a department of journalism; to seek news in the minds of authors as well as upon the street.

After all, there are only three things we want to know about a book. *Is it good for anything?* That is a critic's job, but a good journalist will develop sufficient critical ability to answer the question with approximate truth. *What (or whom) is it good for?* Here a journalist may have the better answer. *What is new in it?* And this is a jour-

The Lady of My Love

By CHARD POWERS SMITH

WILL you be true? Yes, I am true,
True to the lady of my love.
What lady are you speaking of?
Today not you, tomorrow you—
The only lady of my love.

But are you true to me, to me?
Will you be true to flesh and blood?
If she is made of flesh and blood,
The soul of you I can not see,
The soul of you I know to be
The lady of my love.

She walks where ancient lovers are,
The rose behind the changing rose;
Beneath the sea, the sea's repose;
The star that shines behind a star;
The beauty that survives above
This universe that stirs and stirs.
And I am yours while you are hers—
The lady of my love.

This Week

"Proteus, or The Future of Intelligence." Reviewed by *Arthur Colton*.

"No More Parades" and "The Great World." Reviewed by *Mary M. Colum*.

"Inside the Moscow Art Theatre." Reviewed by *John Mason Brown*.

"The Life and Letters of John Burroughs." Reviewed by *Norman Foerster*.

"The Pilgrim of Eternity." Reviewed by *Samuel C. Chew*.

"The Man Mencken." Reviewed by *Ernest Sutherland Bates*.

"Keats and Shakespeare." Reviewed by *Arnold Whitridge*.

"Two Lives." Reviewed by *G. R. Elliott*.

Next Week, or Later

Authorship Ready-to-Wear. By *Burgess Johnson*.

Sandburg's "Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years." Reviewed by *John Drinkwater*.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Saturday Review Company, Inc., has purchased the stock interest of Time, Inc., in *The Saturday Review of Literature*.

Commencing with the issue of February 6, 1926 *The Saturday Review of Literature* will be published by The Saturday Review Company, Inc.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW COMPANY, INC.
Henry S. Canby, President.

nalist's question to be answered (with what expert advice may be needed) by a writer who, whatever else he may be, is a good journalist.

John Woolman

By F. V. MORLEY

NONE of Charles Lamb's chance remarks gives me more pleasure than a sudden, almost unnoticed notice of John Woolman. The year was 1834; the occasion, a breakfast at Crabb Robinson's. The cause of the breakfast was a young American, Nathaniel Parker Willis, poet and flâneur. Willis, as Mr. Lucas says, "was loitering observantly through Europe for the *New York Mirror*, to which paper, unknown to his English friends (with whom he passed for a diplomatist in the making), he was sending lively travel sketches under the title 'Pencilings by the Way'." Willis had impressed Landor favorably, and had obtained from him a letter to Crabb Robinson. He turned up at the latter's rooms in the Temple, asking to meet Charles and Mary Lamb. Robinson, shrewd lawyer, thought Willis a dandy, and "one who strives to be genteel;" but he had the impeccable letter from Landor, and he talked with appreciation of Robinson's friends. He was a pleasing and intelligent listener; and I suspect this flattered Robinson. So Charles and Mary Lamb were invited for breakfast on June 19th, "expressly to be seen by Willis the Yankee." In Crabb Robinson's reminiscences there is the note: "The morning's breakfast was not remarkable. My journal says merely 'Poor M. L. was not strong, but C. L. was quiet.' W. was glad to have seen them." He then goes on in righteous anger to condemn Willis for duplicity and for serving up the breakfast in the American press.

Willis's was not a gentlemanly action; nevertheless, we may be grateful for his account. Since the pencilings were written, by all means let us enjoy them; and the more because Willis was an excellent reporter. Every so often a fresh diarist should be introduced to any man whose conversation is worth recording. Save only Boswell, it is hard to think of a diarist-biographer whose observation does not stale as familiarity increases. Contrast Crabb Robinson's "Poor M. L. was not strong, but C. L. was quiet" with Willis's quick, deft, observant narrative, as it appears in Mr. Lucas's "Life of Lamb." No promptings were necessary. All Willis had to do was to lend enthusiastic attention, and the copy was ready for him; Lamb's talk "was so in the vein of his inimitable writings, that I could have fancied myself listening to an audible composition of new Elias." Only once did Willis set up an Aunt Sally; she was then knocked down with the remark that introduces John Woolman. Willis raised the topic of American literature. Robinson broke in instantly with praise of Webster's speeches, "which he said were exciting the greatest attention among the politicians and lawyers of England." When Robinson's enthusiasm allowed, Lamb said; "I don't know much of American authors. Mary, there, devours Cooper's novels with a ravenous appetite, with which I have no sympathy. The only American book I ever read twice was the 'Journal of Edward Woolman,' a Quaker preacher and tailor, whose character is one of the finest I ever met with. He tells a story or two about negro slaves, that brought the tears into my eyes." Robinson missed this altogether. Willis got it down only through surprise, and, incidentally, got the name wrong. But it was no desire to knock over Aunt Sally that led Lamb to mention the unknown Woolman. It was a sudden, chance reversion of thought to one of his old favorites. "Get the writings of John Woolman by heart," was Lamb's note thirteen years before. He saw Willis prick up at the unfamiliar name, but the dandy was not likely to be interested in Quaker meetings, and the subject changed.

Except for the affectionate insistence of his few admirers, John Woolman's name would be still unknown to the reporters of the world. Yet to those who study the writings of the tailor of Mount Holly in Colonial New Jersey (his dates were 1720-1773), they are more worth keeping than the writings of Ezekiel. As with Ezekiel, Woolman's "Journal" (which is now available in its full form in Mrs. F. B. Gummere's edition)* starts off with a dream:

I had a Dream about the ninth year of my age as follows: I saw the Moon rise near the West, and run a regular course Eastward, so swift that in about a quarter of an hour, she reached our Meridian, when there descended from her a small Cloud on a Direct line to the Earth, which lighted on a pleasant Green about twenty yards from the Door of my Father's House (in which I thought I stood) and was immediately turned into a Beautiful green Tree. The Moon appeared to run on with Equal Swiftness, and soon set in the East, at which the Sun arose at the place where it commonly doth in the Summer, and Shineing with full Radiance in a Serene air, it appeared as pleasant a morning as ever I saw.

All this time I stood in the door, in an Awfull frame of mind, and I observed that as heat increased with the Rising Sun, it wrought so powerfully on the little green Tree, that the leaves gradually withered, and before Noon it appear'd dry and dead. Then there appear'd a Being Small of Size, moving Swift from the North Southward, call'd a 'Sun Worm.'

Tho' I was a Child, this dream was instructive to me.

The instruction, the interpretation, need not concern us. The important thing about this dream is the unusual spaciousness, and the power of direct, swift sight. Clearly the youngster, conscious or unconscious, knew how to taste celestial ichor, and we shall not waste our time in following him. When he was twice this age, still living quietly at home in the village of Rancocas—a village which at that time, for all its being in the New World, was almost as Yorkshire as Yorkshire—his native gift of imagination was allied with a growing reasonableness, and with a will strong to subdue his vanities. He began his grown-up life with a simple creed of charity, of forswearing cruelty, of self-subjection. This creed was followed privately, and to his plain face came those "glances of Real beauty" which belong to those "who dwell in true meekness." To do no harm to man or beast, to love God through loving His creation, seemed to combine happiness in this world and the next. So powerful the joy that followed, it must have expression. "Being under a Strong Exercise of Spirit," he testified in Quaker Meeting to the value of his creed; but "not keeping close to the Divine Opening, I said more than was required of me and being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks, without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could take satisfaction in nothing." Here is the first witness to the nicety of discrimination and to the agony at failure, which characterize John Woolman's mental strife. By this experience he was humbled and disciplined until "understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the language of the pure Spirit which inwardly moves the heart."

So far, one watches the life, the growth, of a poet; that is, of a passionate man whose feelings wrought powerfully for expression in the one conventional, accepted medium he knew. But more and more his passion set in the direction of the Quaker ministry. From his strong feeling sprang "a lively operative desire for the good of others." His attentive, eager reading of the prophets left no doubt in him that he was a watchman in this world, under strict orders from a stern god. The instructions given to Ezekiel were translated by John Woolman into terms of his own life; and no sooner thoughtfully translated than acted on. When he left his father's home, he was

Formerly grounded, and fast setteled

On firme foundation of true bountihed.

and he had every intention of fighting as valiantly as ever Guyon fought for Temperance and for the New Jerusalem. One of his first acts was to reason with an innkeeper at whose house "there was uncommon Reveling." Another was to reason with his employer about the keeping of slaves—which, against common Quaker practice, John Woolman took as "inconsistent with the Christian Religion." The astonishing thing is that the innkeeper was tolerant, and that Woolman's employer respected his apprentice's opinions. Evidently John Woolman was an unusually disarming social reformer. He had his scruples and he would not pocket them obligingly. But his disobligeance was so taking that he had older men upon his side before they knew it, promising him to become better men. He made them apologize to him, and they respected him.

From this time, though his body was sitting cross-legged in his tailor's shop, fingers busily making "a pair of stars of Hannah Woolman" (these cost eighteen shillings), or "a little bonit for Amey Gill" (this tenpence), or "a Pair of Trousers for Cupid" (Cupid was a slave, and his trousers cost a shilling, cash), his heart was abroad with sufferers wherever his mind could find them. Desire to help the negroes led him at many periods to shut up his shop and travel through the south to learn about them or through the north to plead for them. His journal is studded with narratives of journeys, beginning "Having found drawings in my mind to visit friends on Long Island . . . I set off," or "Feeling an exercise in relation to a visit to the Southern parts to increase upon me, I acquainted our monthly meeting therewith, and Obtained their Certificate." More and more often was the door of his home locked, and John Woolman away proving his familiar maxim, that "Conduct is more convincing than language." It is not our purpose to follow these journeys, so much as to note the spirit and the courage with which they were undertaken. They led him into dangers, but he forged shackles for his fears. They led him more often into hardships, but these he dismissed as "deep exercises that were mortifying to the creaturely will." To every one whose "Scituation in life is difficult," John Woolman wanted to carry a message of relief. His journey over the Wyalusing trail to visit an Indian settlement, is an astonishing record of the strength of his purpose. There was no particular reason why he should want to go to Wyalusing. With the utmost sympathy, I cannot see that his short stay among the Indians repaid the effort made to reach them. Never mind, John Woolman felt a call to go and speak with them, and went and spoke, and came away, his duty done, his mind in perfect resignation. He then felt a call to travel, as he had travelled earlier, among slaveholders in the south; but this time chastening his flesh by journeying on foot, discarding physical comforts as far as possible. That he might have more sympathy with slaves, he lived less well than they. Flesh would not stand his treatment. It melted from him; he was left then an anæmic, with large burning eyes. Sometimes he overreached himself, converting others to his creed by pity for his condition rather than by conviction that what he said was true. His close, laborious, continuous enquiry, whether he as an individual kept clear from all things which were connected with or which tended to stir up oppression, cruelty, luxury, led him to habits and to acts which were uncomfortable in a guest. Withal, so native his gentility, so insistent his claims for visiting, that few could refuse his coming; and, humanity being what it is, many good-natured people did whatever he wanted them to do, to give him his sincere and rapturous relief.



When John Woolman was at home he was of unfailing usefulness in the primitive community. He wrote deeds and advertisements for sales; he measured grain for farmers and surveyed their lands; he fetched and carried anything for anyone. He taught, and wrote "A First Book for Children," a tiny 48mo, which he gave away or sold for cost. He was on guard to serve and to protect the village; he fought a spirited verbal contest when a conjurer came to entertain the people of an evening; and he drove the son of Belial away. But he was not content at home; his "concerns," his "calls," made him feel but a sojourner among his family. He felt he ought to go to the Barbadoes; then felt he could not conscientiously take passage in any vessel engaged in the West India trade. He had a severe illness, and thought that it was the Lord's will that he should die, and so refused to aid his nurses; yet had a dream that so encouraged him that he felt he might "remain some longer in the body," and inspired his nurses, and grew well. He then felt "a draft" in his mind towards England, and engaged a passage in the steerage of the ship *Mary and Elizabeth*—he had a scruple against "the Cabbin"—and after five weeks at sea landed at London. He had not wandered far in England, preaching and endeavoring to help the workers, when small-pox caught him, and he died, at York.

In so short a narrative only the comic elements stand out. The small, spare figure in undyed clothing, is but one of many itinerant enthusiasts, part saint, part Uncle Joseph, as the latter was portrayed in "The Wrong Box." But John Woolman is a figure in literature as well as in the quiet annals of the Quakers. He lived, he thought, he felt, and

then he wrote. He knew what he wanted to say and he said it with beautiful Biblical sincerity and simplicity. There is no better short description of a storm at sea, and of the way a man should face a storm at sea, than this fragment from his journal:

This morning the Clouds gathered, the wind blew Strong from south eastward, and before noon increased to that degree that Sailing appeared dangerous. The Seamen then bound up some of their Sails, took some down, and the Storm increasing, they put the dead lights, so called, into the Cabbin windows, and lighted a lamp as at Night.

The wind now blew vehemently, and the Sea wrought to that degree that an awful seriousness prevailed in the Cabbin, in which I spent I believe about seventeen hours; for I believed the poor wet toiling Seamen had need of all the room in the Crowded Steerage, and the Cabbin passenger had given me frequent invitations.

They ceased now from Sailing, and put the vessel in the posture called *lying-to*.

My mind in this tempest, through the gracious Assistance of the Lord, was preserved in a good degree of resignation, and I felt at times a few words in his love to my Ship mates, in regard to the All sufficiency of Him who formed the great deep, and whose care is so extensive that a Sparrow falls not without his notice, and thus in a tender frame of mind spake to them of the necessity of our Yielding in true obedience, to the instructions of our heavenly Father, who sometimes through adversities intendeth our refinement.

About eleven at Night, I went out on the deck, when the Sea wrought exceedingly, and the high foaming waves all round about had in some sort the appearance of fire; but did not give much if any light. The sailor then at the helm said he lately saw a Corposant at the head of the Mast.

About this time I observed that the Master of the Ship ordered the Carpenter to keep on the deck; and though he said little I apprehended his care was that the Carpenter with his axe might be in readiness in case of any extremity.

Soon after this the vehemency of the wind abated, and before morning they again put the Ship under Sail.

The "Journal," containing several passages as fine as this, and some finer but less fitted for quotation, is a remarkable document. It shows in an unsparing light a man who was odd and full of crotchets; who was guileless, meek, and plain; who was uncompromising, direct, occasionally tedious. I am frank enough to say I should flee his company in person, though I love it in his book. In physique he was a weakling. By nature he shrank from pain and from brutality. In mind he was so constructed that an incompleting syllogism hurt. And in moral courage, in the endurance he drew from his few fundamental dogmas, in the firm gentleness with which he acted on them, the sympathy and innocence with which he would extend their influence; in the appreciation of these strong things, strong enough to bring tears to Lamb's eyes, I am on Lamb's side, and not happy about the facile reporter who jotted down John Woolman's name and got it wrong. There never was but one Woolman; Edward could not have been his name; he was Honest John.

Being Intelligent

PROTEUS, or THE FUTURE OF INTELLIGENCE. By VERNON LEE. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1925. \$1.

Reviewed by ARTHUR COLTON

THE diminutive volumes called "Today and Tomorrow Series" have varied considerably in value. The most notable were perhaps the four written by Mr. J. B. S. Haldane and Mr. Bertrand Russell. "Proteus, or The Future of Intelligence," by Miss Violet Paget whose *nom-de-plume* is Vernon Lee, is the latest of the series, and the interest of it lies more in definition than in prophecy.

Proteus is Reality. For what is so protean, so multiform, elusive, partly revealed and then escaping, so never twice the same? "Proteus in my mythology is the mysterious whole which we know must exist but know not how to discry." We are acquainted with appearances, but reality, the reality which is other than ourselves, forever flits away.

By intelligence Miss Paget means the faculty that always endeavors to attain some privileged intercourse with this reality. It is common sense, but something more than common sense, an impersonal and cultivated common sense. It is seeing things as they are, so far as may be, and thinking about them reasonably, in a world where such thinking is rare and such seeing never more than approximate.

In the sense in which I have been using the word, it is of amazingly recent growth. . . . The people of the past, superior though they may be in genius, wit, humor, and even wisdom, would strike us as decidedly stupid; for instance in their incapacity of thinking in terms of change. . . . Until the eighteenth century the only future which people thought about was the future in Heaven or Hell. . . . No interest was left over for any other after life, to wit, of unborn