

In the Driftway

EVER since Professor Michelson of the University of Chicago told the world that, according to his new method of measurement, he estimated the size of Betelgeuse to be 27,000,000 times that of our sun, many people have searched out that star who had never taken the trouble to know it before. Betelgeuse is, in fact, the popular star of the day—or, more correctly, night. This is excellent, in a way, as is anything that encourages us of this age and country to take our eyes and our thoughts off the petty trifles near at hand and raise them to the infinite spaces above. But the attention bestowed upon Betelgeuse and its inconceivable mass makes the Drifter jealous for one of his own pet stars, the giant Canopus of the Southern Hemisphere. The Drifter hopes there is nothing in Professor Michelson's discovery that will upset the relative size of stars as hitherto determined. For, according to such calculations, preeminence has been conceded to Canopus. In "Astronomy with an Opera-glass," Garrett P. Serviss says:

There can be little doubt that Canopus, in the Southern Hemisphere, is a grander sun than Sirius. To our eyes Canopus is only about half as bright as Sirius, and it ranks as the second star in the heavens in the order of brightness. But while Sirius's distance is measurable, that of Canopus is so unthinkably immense that astronomers can get no grip upon it. If it were only twice as remote as Sirius, it would be equal to two of the latter, but in all probability its distance is much greater than that.

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TO the Drifter it has often seemed that our greatest thinkers have been men who communed with the stars; that our profounder philosophies have been developed in regions like the Orient, where men lived much in the open of desert and plain, ever obsessed by the tremendous significance of the burning firmament above them. In this age and country we look seldom at the stars, and then drop our eyes quickly earthward, comprehending neither the science nor the poetry of infinite space. That is one reason, perhaps, why we dare not and cannot handle in our literature, our art, or our daily conversation the great things of existence. We play around the edges, and if we touch the great themes at all it is only in humorous vein. Thus Bert Leston Taylor, the newspaper minstrel who died the other day, wrote:

When temporary chairmen utter speeches,
And frenzied henchmen howl their battle hymns,
My thoughts float out across the cosmic reaches
To where Canopus swims.

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CANOPUS, of course, belongs to the southern heavens and is not visible in most of the United States. The Drifter lately helped to identify this star, however, for a friend who was sojourning in Florida. There it was gloriously visible during the winter, close to the horizon southwest of Sirius, to all who chose to regard it. How many, the Drifter wonders, among the throngs at Palm Beach last winter saw, or even knew of the existence of, this greatest of all suns? A few, he hopes,

For after one has had about a week of
The arguments of friends as well as foes,
A star that has no parallax to speak of
Conduces to repose.

THE DRIFTER

Correspondence

Peasant Rule and Cooperation

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: In the fall of 1919 a movement was started in Yugoslavia whose novel social and political principles might be of sufficient interest to *Nation* readers to justify a brief exposition of them. The movement originated among the peasant cooperators, was organized under the name of the Peasants' League, and at the elections of last November secured forty seats in the National Assembly.

The Yugoslav Peasants' League claims that peasants constitute 85 per cent of Yugoslavia's population; that their labor in products contributes an equal percentage toward the existence of the state, that is toward the upkeep of all cultural institutions; that the peasant class thus constituting numerically and economically the principal support of the state, ought consequently to exercise a corresponding influence in the government of the country and enjoy all the benefits of a culture created by it. The present capitalist system not only deprives the peasant of all power but hoards in towns and cities all the fruits of culture, leaving the villages in ignorance, poverty, and filth. Other good reasons why the peasant majority should rule Yugoslavia are that it is the most altruistic and conciliatory element in society; that it is patriotic without a tinge of imperialism and that it is invariably opposed to war.

As the land should belong to those who till it, all big estates should be divided among the peasants, with a sufficient allotment to each for a decent living. The peasants should form cooperative societies and through them build homes, secure information for increasing the productivity of the soil, gather and sell their products, and thus protect themselves against exploitation by greedy profiteers. Through the cooperative system and peasant rule capital will be deprived of its present omnipotence and turned into what it ought to be, a good and useful servant. Experience gained in all European countries during the last fifty years shows that almost all branches of human work can be successfully operated on a cooperative basis.

The cooperative system applied to every possible branch of human work logically leads to the idea of collaboration among the classes: peasants, workingmen, private and public mental workers, and capitalists. Each of these classes is essential to human progress, each has its special interests to be considered. But no real progress can be attained if one class seeks its welfare in the exploitation or the destruction of the other. Only through their *collaboration* can the general welfare be assured; not through forcing all men to be "equal," as the communists pretend, or through making all men subservient to the moneyed class, as the capitalists practice at present.

But how obtain this desirable collaboration of the classes? By destroying the present political parties and creating class parties or organizations. Instead of professional politicians, class representatives should meet in parliament and legislate. But these great changes can be accomplished only under the auspices of a peasant rule, that is, under a class which is equally opposed to capitalist and communist dictatorship.

Such are, in general terms, the aims of the Yugoslav Peasants' League, led by Mr. Mika Avramovich, general manager of the Yugoslav Cooperative Federation of Belgrade, whose solid culture coupled with twenty-five years of practical work among the Serbian peasants fits him better, perhaps, than any other man in Europe to be the leader and the interpreter of peasant thought. The creed of the Peasants' League is spreading so rapidly in Yugoslavia that its ascendancy to power is only a question of the next election, when the Western world may have occasion to study a new economic and political system steering between the extremes of capitalism and communism.

New York, March 15

J. F. LUPIS-VUKICH.

From Another Alumnus of G. P. College

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: I have read with interest the letter concerning Gopher Prairie College which appeared in your March 16 issue. That interest is due primarily to the fact that a friend of mine, the graduate of another Alma Mater who has gone "on the town," is a member of the faculty of the college referred to. I have seen a copy of the same "Center Hall—Pure American" bulletin referred to by Mr. C. G. J. An experience which my friend had last fall, during the torrid days of the bitter (ahem!) Presidential election, may be illuminating to Mr. C. G. J., and to others.

My friend is a man of strong convictions, and is sometimes guilty of rather unguarded utterance. He forgot that he was in the Palmerized U. S. A. (You see, he had served in the A. E. F. during the greater part of the war, and was, accordingly, out of touch with American patriotic sentiment.) He suggested one day in a casual conversation that he did not consider Eugene V. Debs a horned devil, the return of whose soul to Hades Beelzebub himself is eagerly looking forward to. He further suggested that he did not approve of having Presidents of the United States selected by Penrose, Lodge, Watson, Smoot, and their ilk. Result: a day or two later he was called upon by the president of the Board of Trustees of Gopher Prairie College, was accused of being a Socialist, and was informed that he would be ousted at the next meeting of the board. I understand that he questioned the worthy board as to what is meant by being a Socialist, and found these leaders of American thought woefully lacking in knowledge on this and kindred subjects. He demonstrated, on his part, that he had only been so radical as to support the Pink Progressives in 1912. Result: he was permitted to remain among the corps of independent teachers of Pure Americanism at Gopher Prairie College. But I have no doubt that he is still regarded with bilious eye by those who hold in trust the mental and moral welfare of the youth who inhabit that part of the State which is "almost exclusively" peopled by folk of old American ancestry.

Mr. C. G. J., you are right: at your Alma Mater, as at many another, "no restraint has ever been or will ever be placed upon freedom of thought"—if unexpressed.

Chicago, March 10

N. C.

The Benefits of Military Training

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Among the advantages claimed for military service are the formation of character and the presence in the community of disciplined young men who will resist all forms of lawlessness. Tacoma, Washington, has been experiencing these blessings. It paid well for them in advance by presenting the War Department with a two-million-dollar site upon which to establish the permanent army cantonment of Camp Lewis. The Tacoma Ledger of March 11, 1921, sheds the following light upon the development of military virtues in its vicinity:

In imposing sentence on Private Root, Judge Askren called attention to the fact that most of the crime cases brought before the present grand jury have arisen from the action of Camp Lewis soldiers, or from men just released from service. "The very fact that a man is in uniform takes him from the suspicion of the average citizen," Judge Askren said. "The uniform of the United States soldier never has stood for robbery or any sort of crime. To a person walking along the dark street the appearance of a soldier in uniform usually gives a sense of security equaling the appearance of a city police officer. Yet the history of crime in this country during the last few months has centered about men wearing the olive drab of the army. Instead of the army cantonment being a blessing to the community, as it should be and has been in the past, Camp Lewis is rapidly assuming the position of a curse to us. . . ."

Seattle, Washington, March 15

STUART A. RICE

Hawthorne MEMORIAL LIBRARY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: When William Allen White said Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street" ranks with the "Scarlet Letter" he probably did not have in mind that Hawthorne has written a tale entitled Main Street, nor has Lewis perhaps been aware of it. It is interesting to turn to this tale first published in 1849. Though it is only episodic, "somewhat in the nature of a puppet show," one may find in it a vitality that Lewis's soulless account lacks:

These wanderers have received from Heaven a gift that, in all epochs of the world, has brought with it the penalties of mortal suffering and persecution, scorn, enmity, and death itself—a gift that, thus terrible to its possessors, has ever been most hateful to all other men, since its very existence seems to threaten the overthrow of whatever else the toilsome ages have built up—the gift of a new idea. You can discern it in them, illuminating their faces—their whole persons, indeed, however earthly and cloddish—with a light that inevitably shines through, and makes the startled community aware that these men are not as they themselves are—not brethren nor neighbors of their thought.

Urbana, Illinois, March 22

ERNEST ERWIN LEISY

Should All Laws Be Obeyed?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: There are too many Homer Reeds in this country who seem to have gathered nothing from history or experience. Mr. Reed's whole argument is that law, regardless of its idiocy or despotism, must be obeyed. If this had been the thought of our fathers there would be no United States of America.

The Kansas law to which he refers tends to, and was apparently intended to, suppress labor unions. Howat believes the law to be both wrong and unconstitutional. By what other method than disobeying it can he test that law?

Peoria, Illinois, March 14

NATHAN A. COLE

The New York Peace Society

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: On page 30 of *The Nation* of January 12, you severely criticize the policies of the New York Peace Society "from 1914 on." You imply a charge of inconsistency because it "elected as vice-president the head of the Navy League." The truth is that Gen. Horace Porter, president of the Navy League, resigned his membership and office in the Society in 1913, because it opposed the increased naval and military expenditures which he favored. You say that this Society in the same manifesto declared for universal peace and more battleships. The truth is that it did not advocate any increase in battleship construction.

Because this Society, "from 1914 on," did not oppose the production of all instruments of war, you say that its members were "pretended lovers of peace." I respectfully submit that the word "pretended" is singularly inapplicable in this connection to such men as Andrew Carnegie, Samuel T. Dutton, Wm. H. Short, George W. Kirchwey, Frederick Lynch, Hamilton Holt, Charles E. Jefferson, and others like them, the leaders of this Society.

It is true that their road to international peace and justice differs from yours, but I hope that you will consent to acquit them of the charge of pretense or hypocrisy.

New York, February 2

CHARLES H. LEVERMORE

[The Peace Society in 1915 publicly "stood behind" the President in his advocacy of three battleships. From our benighted point of view, a Peace Society which stands for battleships is on a par with an Anti-Drug Society urging the moderate use of the hypodermic syringe. Dr. Levermore does not deny that General Porter was chosen as Vice-President of the Society when head of the Navy League.—EDITOR THE NATION.]

Books

Sarah Cleghorn

Turnpike Lady.—The Spinster.—Fellow Captains (with Dorothy Canfield).—*Portraits and Protests*. By Sarah Cleghorn. Henry Holt and Company.

IN our high school and early college days many of us who wanted to write encountered the doctrine that literature must never, could never in fact, be "propaganda." In practice this musty superstition, still held by a disconcertingly large number of intelligent people, worked out to mean that any passionate expression of unpopular conviction, however fiery, lucid, or beautiful in itself, failed of justification as a piece of writing. Defense of the existing order, however, or of any order which had safely ceased to exist, was not for some reason subject to this disqualification. It could be moving and beautiful without arousing suspicion, and if as was most frequently the case it was merely lightly and brightly scornful of anything new, young, or generous, it became a triumphant example of "the way to write." The way to write, it seemed, was to have nothing of any particular moment to say, and to say it with a kind of portentous playfulness.

The persistence of this obscuring and undeveloped attitude probably accounts in part for the neglect of a native talent so rare and distinctive, so fresh and individual, as that of Sarah Cleghorn, the Vermont poet and novelist. She is the author of two too little known novels, "The Turnpike Lady" and "The Spinster," of occasional magazine verse, and of a slim volume of poetry, "Portraits and Protests." Much of her best work is undoubtedly propaganda in the sense that all great work is propaganda which is neither deliberate moralizing nor a projected intellectual attitude but the expression of an irresistible passionate conviction, a personal affirmation, and an act of faith, and its importance is due in part at least to this very quality which makes it the reverse of the literary models held up to our adolescence.

"The Spinster," which appeared in 1916, was until the recent appearance of "Moon-Calf" hardly equaled in our literature as an autobiographical novel. Ellen Graham, Miss Cleghorn's heroine, is a feminine edition of the Moon-Calf. The record of her life, like that of the life of Felix Fay, is largely one of mental adventure, and Miss Cleghorn has the gift, as Floyd Dell has, of making these adventures vivid and important. Ellen Graham's experiences are the discoveries of ideas. Her excitements are experiments with writing and conversion to socialism and anti-vivisection. These excitements we are enabled to share through Miss Cleghorn's close and clear-eyed identification with her heroine. While the latter half of the book, dealing with Ellen's early maturity and relating among other things a slight and tepid love-episode, falls somewhat below the high standard the author set herself in writing of her childhood and adolescence, the book as a whole is singularly candid and significant. It is memorable not only as a charming, sympathetic, and humorous picture of the "viewy" little girl and her Vermont background but as an unusually sure and searching record of the elusive and complicated processes of mental growth, a record in Miss Cleghorn's case of the making of a radical. To readers of her poems it has a particular interest for the light it throws on the origin of the two distinctive strains in her: the native Vermonter with her strong love of Vermont country and history, her cherishing reconstruction of its old-time scenes and characters; and the modern passionate poet of pity and rebellion, the mystical Christian Socialist and pacifist. In both veins she is one of the most deeply individual of our poets.

It is her early Vermont poems that figure in "The Spinster" as Ellen Graham's "sunbonnet" verses. Varying from purely descriptive pictures of people and places to intensely imaginative little dramas and phantasies, they are alike in their

limpid clearness, their simplicity, their whimsical, appealing, and occasionally slightly sentimental tenderness. Unlike most old-fashioned or rustic poems, they are distinct and full flavored, as evocative of the atmosphere of early New England as an old-fashioned color print. Too often such attempts at recreation are merely a setting forth of stage properties—an elaborate restoring of surface quaintnesses. It is otherwise in these poems of Sarah Cleghorn's, not only because she has a real imaginative gift but because they are the result of a long, happy, almost unconscious absorption of this atmosphere. She is deeply rooted in Vermont soil, impregnated with its sights, sounds, and distinctive quality. This is the case even when she draws for her material on the Vermont of a long dead past, as in *Old Portraits Revisited*, *Morrice Waters*, or *In a Far Township*, because it is a past whose echoes so evidently haunted and charmed her childhood, a past which was fused by so many associations and traditions with her own environment that she could feel and express for it an authentic and personal emotion.

These early poems, too, were the logical precursors of the "protests"—the militant full-blown and less-known poems of social rebellion. As conceived by Ellen Graham these country poems were to be not merely fanciful portraits but "to embody some shy and covert gospel of gentleness and brotherly love." It is a gospel which still finds expression in Sarah Cleghorn's poems, but it is an expression neither covert nor shy but full throated and ringing, as intensely living as the personality behind them. Her poems of the past, which have met with a slight recognition, were full of a gentle and reflective acceptance. The Protests are passionate and searching rejections. Rejected themselves by an attitude inherited from the past, they are perhaps destined to be among the revolutionary songs of tomorrow. It seems not too much to hope for such poems as Richard Ford and Hermann Suhr, *The Poltroon*, *The Survival of the Fittest*, or for this brief and forceful quatrain:

The golf links lie so near the mill
That almost every day
The laboring children can look out
And see the men at play.

MARTHA GRUENING

China's Foreign Trade

The Foreign Trade of China. By Chong Su See. Columbia University. Longmans, Green and Company.

BESIDES its intrinsic interest Dr. See's volume is worth noting as completing the second hundred in the series of monographs edited by the Political Science Faculty of Columbia University that deserves to be reckoned among the most creditable issues of the sort coming from any institution in this country. Twelve of these are doctors' theses by Chinese students which have added measurably to our first-hand knowledge of such economic problems as come within range of the series and are an indication of the positive contribution to American scholarship already derived from our share in the education of Orientals. No country is so well served today as the United States in authoritative information about Eastern Asia, and it is the fault of the inquirer if opinions are still founded upon travelers' tales and newspaper clippings.

The main value of Dr. See's work lies in his presentation from the Chinese standpoint of a subject that has been fairly covered by fuller histories in English. "Most of the books given to us by foreign writers," he complains, "have not done the Chinese justice. They generally describe the activities of the foreigner in China in his own terms and solely from his own standpoint, and are designed primarily to justify the policy of some power in that country. As to the impression produced by those activities upon the Chinese themselves, we are left perfectly in the dark." The charge is rather over-