

we do nothing towards making that ultimate identity palpable: we succeed merely in branding ourselves as mystics.

There is but one way of advancing. We must examine much more deeply than we have hitherto attempted to do, the experiences of the great individuals in the history both of religion and art. Some desultory efforts at the task have been made already by the psychologists. The best I know is William James's "Some Varieties of Religious Experience." I admire the book: but it is inevitably one-sided, and it is also crude. Religion must be treated with the same delicacy and discrimination as art. In order to discover what poetry is, we do not collect all the outpourings of local bards in local newspapers and seek to find what they have in common: we choose the great poetry of great poets for our data. Surely it must not be otherwise with religion. To be greatly religious calls for genius no less than to be greatly poetic. And if it be said that religion (or at least the Christian religion) is essentially universal, making its appeal to all men, it must be replied that art is just as universal; but the fact is that both these universalities are ideal and not actual. In order to know what art and religion really are we must take them at their maximum of intensity not at their maximum of dilution. That was the method of the great master of physical research, Michael Faraday. In order to find the connection between art and religion, we must examine the greatest artists and the greatest saints together.

It is not an easy thing to do, and above all, it is not a work for the psychologist as he at present exists. The recent excursions of the psycho-analysts and others into the realm of artistic intuition have been too lamentably revealing. The great artist and the great saint, and anyone who understands them, have all forgotten more psychology than the most advanced psycho-analyst ever knew. Modern psychology is a pseudo-science of the most clumsy and pretentious kind, and in its *parvenu* confidence has not even yet begun to realize that Christian theology (for instance in the doctrine of "grace" efficient or otherwise) begins where it ends. Psychology is, by derivation, the science of the soul. The modern psychologist assumes, with a naivety that is astonishing, that the soul does not exist. It never occurs to him to ask himself whether the many men of supreme intellectual and spiritual powers who through the centuries have spoken of the soul as a reality, could possibly have been speaking of something which does not exist. He assumes that these great men were colossally ignorant, because they did not go to their monasteries by motor-car or conduct their lives by the telephone. It never occurs to him to ask himself whether the science of the soul might not be precisely the science in which the methods of the physical sciences are, *by nature*, useless, and one in which a Chinese sage of a few dozen millennia before the twentieth century might be rather more expert than themselves. How many modern "psychologists," I wonder, have ever heard of, much less read, St. Thomas Aquinas's *definition* of the soul? Perhaps when they have read it, and understood it, they may be allowed to matriculate.

I have no animus against "psychologists" so long as they stick to the physiological. When they pass beyond it, they are for the most part like Hotentots in the Parthenon. Before we can listen to their crude outpourings we must demand that they should master some rudiments of that science of the soul which is contained in the confessions of the great artists and the great saints. As for permitting them to take in hand the task of examining and comparing the experiences of these great souls—Heaven forbid! Men who are still capable of explaining Christ away as an epileptic and Shakespeare as a degenerate would be more profitably employed in the urgent work of discovering whether anything remains of a soul within themselves.

I do not know who will do the work unless it is the literary critics: and it seems likely that we shall have to wait for a new generation even of them, or at least for a new impulse and a new courage in the present generation. The pure creative impulse in literature is dwindling. If, therefore, as I sometimes believe, a period of searching and therefore creative criticism is at hand, the work I am trying to suggest may be accomplished far more quickly than seems likely now. At all events, in the hope that someone may be stimulated by it, I will give a concrete example of the kind of comparison I have in mind.

In March, 1819, John Keats, who had fallen passionately in love and knew himself menaced by

consumption, passed through a period of profound gloom. He was almost completely silent. Eventually he emerged out of the gloom to write the "Odes"—the poems which place him second only to Shakespeare among the pure poets of the English language. At the beginning of this period of gloom and silence, he wrote, on March 19, an astonishing letter. It is fairly well known: for it contains the famous passage:

This it is that makes the amusement of life to a speculative mind—I go among the fields and catch a glimpse of a stoat or a field-mouse peeping out of the withered grass—the creature hath a purpose and his eyes are bright with it. I go among the buildings of a city and I see a man hurrying along—to what? the creature hath a purpose and his eyes are bright with it.

That letter is perhaps the most remarkable example of pure poetic perception in act that we have in the English language. Keats is discovering (and we watch him discover) a harmony in the human universe. But the beginning of the letter is profoundly interesting. Keats describes his condition: he has been in bed till ten in the morning.

This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless. . . . In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement nor pain no unbearable power. . . . This is the only happiness, and is a rare instance of the body overpowering the mind. . . .

To what effect of profound and miraculous vision Keats's mind was overpowered, the rest of the letter is witness.

Now compare the words of perhaps the greatest of all Christian mystics, Meister Eckhart, on "the eternal birth of the soul."

Active intellect abstracts the images of outward things, stripping them of matter and accidents and introduces them to the passive intellect. . . . And the passive intellect made pregnant by the active in this way, knows and cherishes these things with the help of active intellect. Passive intellect cannot keep on knowing things unless the active intellect keeps on enlightening it. Now observe. What the active intellect does for the natural man, that and far more does God do for the solitary soul: he turns out active intellect and installing himself in his stead he himself assumes the duties of the active intellect. When a man is quite idle, when his intellect is at rest within him, then God takes up the work: he himself is the agent who produces himself in the passive intellect.

To my mind there is no doubt whatever that Eckhart and Keats are describing the same rare condition of soul. If anyone should say: What have God and the soul to do with Keats? let him read the remainder of Keats's letter. If he still cannot believe that it contains what can only be called a vision of God immanent in the world as perceived by the soul, let him turn on to the more remarkable letter with which Keats finally emerged from the silence. That contains a vision of the world deliberately described in terms of God and the soul as "The Vale of Soul-making." Keats describes how a soul is made. What he says is perfectly true: that is how a soul is made. He knew because he had passed through that eternal birth of the soul which Meister Eckhart described and preached. And if we desire to know by what miracle Keats's vision of the world suddenly became so exquisite, so true, so harmonious, and so magical, we have only to turn to Eckhart again:

Thy face is turned so full towards this birth (of the soul) no matter what thou dost see and hear, thou receivest nothing save this birth in anything. All things are simply God to thee who seest only God in all things. Like one who looks long at the sun, he encounters the sun in whatever he afterwards looks at. If this is lacking, this looking for and seeing God in all and sundry, then thou lackest this birth.

A Diverting Novel

MOCKBEGGAR. By LAWRENCE W. MEYNELL.
New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by JOHN CARTER

Oh, the gay and gallant Georgians; and through all their ghostly laughter, their ghostly gallantry, their ghostly wit . . . but being in London, and in Half Moon Street, I fell to thinking sadly of all the gay and gallant people I had known in it, of all the dear and desperate people I had met there, of all the friendships and the follies we committed, of all the fine and foolish things we said; oh, the Georgians, the gay and gallant Georgians.

WHEN a writer leads off thus wistfully, albeit alliteratively, of pre-war England, we suspect the influence of Shane Leslie's "End of a Chapter." We note, moreover, that Rose Macaulay is not altogether silent in such chronological satire as the following remarks on 1914:

Which was a fitting thing in that somewhat extraordinary year (now ever to be remembered as a memorable year, the Last of All the Years) when Ireland was quite full of people preparing to kill one another, and Hyde Park railings were positively festooned with misguided women who (but the newspapers never explained how they accomplished it) kept tying themselves there.

Further on we detect our old friend Samuel Pepys in such a remark as: "So on to lunch solitary and a little soured . . ."

While endeavoring to reconcile these ingredients, we are introduced to a flock of woolly, white epigrams in the manner of the esurient Oscar Wilde gambolling pastorally in a Michael Arlen setting.

However, as the narrative unfolds, describing exquisite young gentlemen and ladies, faultlessly attired, well-bred to the point of sublimation, moving in the best London—oh, but Mayfair—circles, we find ourselves once again in that familiar camping ground of the recent Oxford graduate, as surveyed by Compton Mackenzie and Stephen McKenna: the brilliant young novel. And we come to the conclusion that "Mockbeggar," like all such brilliant young novels, is, in the phrase which Owen Wister's "Virginian" applied to the railroad, "sired by a syndicate." It has, however, the distinction of being rather more frank in acknowledging its manifold paternity than is general to such fiction.

The first two-thirds of "Mockbeggar" are dedicated almost solely to establishing, through a set of rather unusual characters, the truth of the formula that "polish never does away with passion . . . that flippancy is by no means synonymous with folly." Those of us who do not treat conscious superiority as a vice, will hardly grudge Mr. Meynell his assured familiarity with the intimacy of those charmed circles which no mere American and oh, so few English people seem able to enter except in such books.

Little need be said of his characters. Lucidly drawn, and attractively convincing in the minor parts, the central figures are not entirely plausible. The heroine, Rachael Massinger, is patently addicted to pretty little mannerisms which would make William Baxter recall his "baby-talk lady"; and we shall have to accept the author's word for her charm, for she appears to baffle description; at any rate, he selects her for the Dresden shepherdess around whom the epigrammatic lambs frisk, for the sun around which a group of planetary beings gyrate. And if their rotation engenders no music of the spheres, at least it affords the author an opportunity to work off all these observations on society, life, and letters which seem to be part of the impedimenta of every young writer of promise. From an historical viewpoint, the most interesting character is Vivian Dalmeny, a strange compound of Disraeli's "Endymion" and Wilde's "Dorian Grey." Charming, urbane, witty, superficial, selfish, cruel, he is of one flesh with Richard Harding Davis's "Van Bibber" and the undergraduate beau ideal of the '90's. Better than that, he is a very perfect specimen of the well-bred cad.

As we have said, the book, in the main, affords only a background for stylistic pyrotechnics. Furthermore, it serves the author as a base from which he raids the literary mannerisms of other writers, and as an arena where he can take falls out of other authors, including Samuel Pepys, G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, A. S. M. Hutchinson, and Rose Macaulay, the latter being slated for two bouts.

Mr. Meynell's company of gay and gallant Georgians move serenely ahead through dances, the war, heart-break and happiness; then, quite unexpectedly, the wax-works come to life and the fireworks subside. The last third of the book is action, character, and style combined into an effective and intriguing climax which makes one regret the waste motion of the earlier portions.

The criticisms which can be brought against "Mockbeggar" are numerous and severe. It is highly artificial, dealing with events and persons of high rank, which impress the reader as both rather high and rather rank. The manner of presentation is extremely affected, and the style, or the hand-book of Georgian styles, is as satisfactory as rococo at its worst. Nevertheless, the book is clever, diverting, and written with dash. A new star has risen in the firmament; and that is always an event, no matter whether the star be one of those which slowly circle the unalterable Stella Polaris of ultimate truth, or, as in this case, one of those tinsel affairs which lend so much to the adornment of a Christmas tree or the gayety of a masquerade.

Fighting Success

ARROWSMITH. By SINCLAIR LEWIS. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

WITH "Arrowsmith" Sinclair Lewis justifies and achieves his ambition to become a national novelist. Manifest destiny has been the watchword of this nation, and Success the chief objective of its inhabitants. In two remarkable stories, "Main Street" and "Babbitt," Mr. Lewis has satirically pursued in the characters of his heroes common ideals of American success and proved them failure. Main Street, as Lewis sees it, is failure, and so is Carol Kennicott; Zenith is failure—spiritually and emotionally failure—and so is the rather pathetic Babbitt. And now Lewis drives home his moral by choosing for protagonist a very human scientist congenitally opposed to success as America sees success, a scientist meshed and intermeshed in a social organization made to achieve success, fighting it, fought by it, triumphing by seizing in the midst of an American success his ideal, which the community calls failure.

"Arrowsmith" is by no means the moral document which this outline suggests. It is a "hard-boiled" story of a "hard-boiled" youth, whose tough idealism is a thousand miles and a century away from the transcendental philosophy of Emerson's "Goodbye, proud world, I'm going home." Arrowsmith is rough, and rather unmoral, and almost illiterate except in his own science, and excessively bad-mannered, and entirely unsympathetic, so that the reader shares the surprise of her friends when a sophisticated and very rich widow marries him toward the end of the story. He differs from the other rough-necks in the medical school and the slovenly "docs" of the country towns where he practises only in this, that an old German scientist, Gottlieb, as cranky as Arrowsmith, has ignited in him the spark of research, and kindled a pilot flame which burns irrepressibly and flares up again and again when the "bunk" of easy money, of charlatan medical politics, of publicity, seems to have overlaid the essential Arrowsmith. He wants to find what things are, to get at the truth about "phages," epidemics, immunizations; even the sacrifice of "controls" on his experiment in order to save the population of a West Indian island from bubonic plague seems a sin against his destiny. The human race interests him only mildly; the truth is more important than their immediate welfare, more important perhaps than the race.

I give an impression of a philosophical book, which is not my intention, for in truth there are few depths of philosophy in a Lewis novel. "Arrowsmith" is a simon pure example of the realistic, biographical novel, crowded with portraits, brilliantly photographed, of types fresh in American fiction. It is, furthermore, satire, and biting satire of the medical profession, the better satire because there is evident mastery of what modern medicine has accomplished and may do. As with "Main Street," which this book resembles much more closely than it does "Babbitt," a state of mind is the center of the storm area. In "Main Street," it was the miasma of the small town; in "Arrowsmith" it is the stifling of science and all search for truth everywhere in a country mad for success. Another man might have worked out the theme of this story with religion as its heart and Christ returned as the protagonist.

The realism of "Arrowsmith" is a return to the realism of "Main Street." In the character of Babbitt, Sinclair Lewis, as it is now clear in perspective, transcended his own limitations and created one of the great type figures of modern literature, a man as human as any fellow mortal and yet significant for American social history. There is no such figure in "Arrowsmith" but instead a gallery of studies of the period, touched with caricature, almost brutal in their naturalism: "Clif," the loud-mouthed salesman, Dr. Gottlieb, the single-minded scholar, Pickenbaugh, who makes politics out of public health, Sondelius, the romanticist of science, Capitola, who founds research laboratories for the same reason that she buys pearl necklaces, Holabird, the Social scientist. It is a remarkable selection from the American scene, and need not be sniffed at by the æsthetic because of its Hogarthian exaggeration, and literal reality of detail. This may not be great art, but it is an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of ourselves and our times; and

whatever may be the future of "Arrowsmith" in *belles lettres*, its place in quotation and reference in all histories of our epoch is clearly secure. Furthermore, among these etched caricatures done with such clear and final lines, is one portrait that is much more than satiric caricature. Leora, the first wife of Martin Arrowsmith, who trots along with him like a wise little dog, tactful and plucky and adaptable and humorous even over her own failure ever to be smart or brilliant, Leora is the realist's version of what the American sentimentalist means by "a good pal." Unlike every other person in the crowded story, she lifts above its satire as not being in it for any necessary satiric reason except that she exists so vividly in the imagination of the novelist that he must give her life and place. She is possessive without being predatory, she convinces absolutely like one of Jane Austen's characters without any apparent effort on the part of the novelist to make her convincing. If "Arrowsmith" were not armored and munitioned and speeded for a battleship of satire she would seem more important than all the rest of the crew. Leora, and Babbitt in his later chapters, indicate that when Mr. Lewis grows weary of exposing the world he may, if he will, turn from brilliant social science imaginatively portrayed to pure fiction.

It makes very little difference to me as a reader whether he does or not, and most of the criticisms of Lewis's untempered realism seem to me irrelevant. He is doing a good job where he is. "Arrowsmith" is a better book than "Main Street," better written and much better conducted. If it is not so good a novel as "Babbitt," its satire is at least as important and perhaps better documented. Browning was perhaps rash in asserting that all service ranks the same with God, but it is certainly true that Lewis as a social satirist is eminently serviceable, and that we can well afford to let the future take care of his permanent literary values.



His defects are not literary defects so much as qualities of his particular service. It is true that "nice" people (and there are "nice" people who are neither smug nor stupid nor obscurantist) do not get into his stories. He does not register "nice" people; they do not interest him; and if he were mirroring society instead of satirizing it this would be a prime error. It prevents him obviously from being a Shakespeare, or even a Thackeray, but why should he be either? Stendhal, also, was insensitive to "nice" people. Swift was not, which made him a *rara avis* among satirists. It is time to stop prating of the limitations of Lewis, and on the basis of three of the most remarkable books of our generation give him credit for what with all his faults of narrow vision, insensitiveness to much but not all beauty, obsession with detail, lack of spirituality, and negative philosophy, he undoubtedly is, one of the most brilliant and most serviceable students of society in our times. Wells is his master, but as a social novelist he has left Wells behind him, and if posterity forgets him it will not be for any lack of excellence in his work but because of the impermanence of the category in which he has chosen to labor. The best text books die when their service is rendered. Leora in "Arrowsmith" belongs to a more enduring form of literature than the gallery of illustrations of our times that accompany her.

"Arrowsmith" is an intensely American novel. The hero is scarcely conscious of another continent except as he touches its spirit in pure science. In spite of his lifelong fight against success, he remains as objective as a guinea pig and as strenuous as a subway. From the first page to the very last, when Martin has tasted of complete worldly success and thrown it all over for happiness in work, there is never any question except as to what he shall do. Action is the key to every chapter, every incident. "What shall I do?" is written in letters of fire on his brain. What he is, what life is, what he should think, what feel—these are all irrelevant to the story because in his hustling existence there is never any time for them. A Quaker of the seventeenth century or an aristocrat of the eighteenth would marvel at this book, and the society it depicts. Even Gottlieb wonders whether humanity is worth his science. In truth, the philosophy of America as "Arrowsmith" gives it is perhaps more deeply ironical than the author intended. There is essentially no greater clarity of mind in those who like Martin and Gottlieb despise success than in the "Holy Wren" and the cynical Angus who yearn for it. The idealists have no plan except to be always working at their passion. They are just as strenuous, just

as irresponsible, just as disregarding of any end except their own pleasure. The difference is solely that Lewis's heroes work at something greater than themselves, while his villains serve their baser instincts. To a saint, or an ascetic, or even to a civilized European all might seem to be mad though with a difference in the morale of their madness.

I suppose that Lewis has been unfair to the medical profession although he has certainly made its heroes stand out with a dignity which no one in "Babbitt" or "Main Street" achieved. I fancy that we who read the book will be for a while unduly suspicious of our physicians. All satires exaggerate—they have to in order to accomplish a satiric effect. Mr. Lewis has called in a scientific man as col-laborator so as to direct his pen in unfamiliar ways and insure against too much injustice. But the injustice, if it exists, is not important. Was Dickens just? Was Main Street just? And yet Main Street existed in every small town even if it was never the whole of it. And Babbitt had a thousand prototypes, even if they were more than Babbitt. Main Street was purged and Babbitt lanced by those pungent volumes, though neither was cured, and we can accept their plea of injustice with equanimity, since more good was done than harm. So it will be with "Arrowsmith."

A harsh book, a hard book, in spite of Leora, an illuminating book in a good sense, since it touches upon a universal theme while airing a particular malady, a well written and intensely interesting book in spite of its medical jargon; not a great novel, I suppose, because Lewis knows little of the subtler springs of human nature, and cares less, preferring to grasp the type and let the individual go; and yet a shrewder and more comprehensive satire of American society in the prosperous phase of its materialistic era than anyone else now practising in English is capable of—this much can be said without exaggeration of Arrowsmith.*

As Youth Is

SOUNDINGS. By A. HAMILTON GIBBS. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1925. \$2.

Reviewed by GRANT OVERTON

THE quality of "Soundings," by A. Hamilton Gibbs, is easily such as to make it one of the important novels of the year. Its theme is simple—a girl of fine nature and free development is frustrated in love and discovers her instinct for maternity. This is a common human experience and upon the terms and treatment depend the result, which may be anything from an ephemeral sensation to a classic idyl by a Thomas Hardy.

Mr. Gibbs has made his Nancy Hawthorne the daughter of an R. A. living and working in an English village called Brimble. Jim Hawthorne is his daughter's admirable comrade. An experience at eighteen spurs Nancy to get out and see something of the world. She goes to Paris, lives in a studio, and chums with an American girl, Cornelia Evans. It is in Paris that she meets Cornelia's brother, Lloyd, and his chum from Oxford, Bob Whittaker. She falls in love with Bob.

This much may perhaps be told to suggest the terms of the story; and now for the treatment. Given such terms, it is the happiest imaginable and the most successful. This is a story of young people in the years just preceding the war, with one brief scene or two during the war and a coda laid just afterward. On such material all varieties of method have been tried in recent fiction. Cynicism, both bitter and fatigued; sentimentalism; efforts between the lyric and the epic, and even hysteria have not given an impression of perdurability. Mr. Gibbs, by a property that seems rather magical, approaches from the precise direction of youth itself; he is romantic in the moments when youth is romantic and over the same objects, that is, things, or children, or much older people. But in the paramount concern of young people, their interest in and relations with others of their age and kind, he is as direct, as unsentimental, as eager, honest, and frank as they were—and are, and always will be.

The result is absolutely refreshing. It seems rather inevitable that a novelist who is the younger brother of Philip (Hamilton) Gibbs and Cosmo Hamilton (Gibbs) should be forced into comparisons. If one were to use "Soundings" as the only measure, one would be forced, I think, to believe

*A letter upon the medical aspects of "Arrowsmith," by Dr. Richard Cabot, will be printed next week.