

mean to love spiritual freedom, to exercise inspired ingenuity, to constantly discriminate between code and mere convention, to exult in the abundant richness of life, to fight for an unpopular principle, to go intrepidly forward, surmounting obstacles in the search for new horizons, Amy Lowell was in her art a great American. Intensely cultivated, she was also properly eccentric (being possessed of genius) to the formal emptiness of much of the life around her. She gave and demanded constant mental stimulus. She shouldered the responsibilities of the artist, which may be other than the responsibilities of the average person, but are (what the average person rarely understands) every whit as onerous.

I admired and admire her because she always carried with her the zest of intellectual conflict; my affection goes out to her in memory because of many instances of graciousness. Benefactions of the spirit are difficult to render or acknowledge. And sometimes we were far enough from accepting each other's theories. Sometimes we were both belligerent. But I acknowledge many benefactions, of rapier-keen analysis, of priceless characterization, of sudden unexpected blunt bits of praise that dwell in the memory.

That high-hearted, straight gazing, often smilingly savage antagonist is gone. Private kindnesses in multitude she hid behind seeming truculence. In the immediate past one grieved to see her worn in constant service to her art, proceeding gallantly despite sickness and ill-health. She had achieved a shrewd philosophy, without sentimentality, but full of charity. The little, brittle bickering of the mere formalists and the pedants had long since impatiently been brushed aside. All that mattered was to continue to create at one's highest pitch.

And often, how courtly an antagonist! And, God, how she praised this world! Has the world, that often made such a cheap and silly mock of a few piquant eccentricities, any conception of how royally her burning view of its cities, seas, clouds, flowers, sunsets, of its history and lineage and legend,—repaid it? Well, her pictures have durable color. They will remain to stimulate the observation and inspire the technique of other generations. She knew the proper uses of her pen. She rode a high horse on the King's Highway of Art. A great lady, a great opponent, a great friend! Her head is still high, her spirit is still riding.

A Meditation on Straws

(Continued from page 769)

this one is actually an indication that people are turning more and more from the printed page to the badly reproduced photograph with an explanatory line. Is it not rather an indication that people who formerly could not read at all are beginning to spell out captions and gain some impression, at least, of the largeness of the world through a newspaper they can really understand?

And, again, the second straw. Let us frankly admit that most of the confession articles are perfectly terrible: written with incredible lack of taste and banality, obviously sensational, false in most of their values. Nevertheless, here we discern a groping on the part of the rank and file toward, and an understanding of, applied psychology. The most subtle vivisection of human nature in the truest of novels would be beyond their comprehension. But they are beginning to wonder. They are beginning to desire some analysis of their own motives that they can understand, seeking for parallels with their own experience, not stories made up by some writer but actual chronicles. They are badly fooled, of course. The "true stories" they pore over are rarely if ever true, the confessions of a better grade are not really what they are after. But something in them over and above the mere desire for sensationalism is alive and seeking.

And, in regard to our third straw, the rank and file are groping, we feel, toward a vocabulary. Suddenly there is this strange and crude etymological interest, whose satisfaction has made fortunes for the cross-word puzzle publishers. Again the stirring of the mass. Thus we interpret through rosy spectacles. Yet we believe that there is something in this viewpoint. The man we called the "average man" yesterday has passed on. He is reading and discussing better books than he read formerly. And formerly he did not worry about discussing them.

Thus Optimism! But we prefer it to the opposite view!

The BOWLING GREEN

The Middle Country Road

ONCE I collaborated in writing a novel. In fact, twice; but the first seizure was never read by anyone. In the second case it was my partner who planned that the scene should be laid at the eastern end of Long Island; but when the time came for writing that part of the story my colleague had gone abroad. I gave a quite circumstantial description of the extremities of Paumanok; which was meritorious, as I had never seen them. I have often wondered whether my collaborator, whom I will conceal under the name of D— M—, has ever been there himself. I concealed my ignorance from him; perhaps he his from me.

This is only the preamble. The amble itself is that the other day it occurred to me that it would be an honest thing to find out whether that part of Long Island is at all like my description of it. Besides, a new car is a great incentive to travel. So Titania and I got into Dean Swift and went eastward.

I foresee that I am not going to be able to tell you as much as I should like to about the scenery. There are always so many agreeable analogies that flit into the mind and impede narration. In the case of the novel that D— M— and I wrote we ruled out all philosophizing; the narrative (if I do have to say it, because the publisher never did) was delightfully rapid. This was because the story was written with the firm intention of selling it to the movies; which has not yet been consummated. The agent complained that it did not have enough Lust at First Sight. He said (he is a well-read man, the agent) that it was neither one Dell nor the other: neither Floyd nor Ethel. He said there was no Pola Negri in our woodpile. If I had the clipping here I believe I would tell you what the *New York Times* said about that story. Why, it was a perfectly splendid notice. If you will turn back to your file of the *Times*, May 25, 1924, you can see. Another reason why the story moved so swiftly was that both D— M— and I had determined we would create the most delightful girl in modern fiction; then we both fell in love with her and wanted to write all the bits of dialogue belonging to her; so each one hastened on and on, to get past his allotted section and into the other man's. That was why it only took two and a half years to write the book. The real reason was that we had drawn some advance money from the publisher on the strength of the mere synopsis. Nothing makes a book so hard to write as having got money for it beforehand. Let this be a warning to publishers.

But, as I began to say, Titania and I set off eastward. The reason why I shall not say much about the scenery is that I didn't really study it in detail. I got the *feeling* of it rather than any precise observation. For driving a new car is a gloriously introspective business. You are too happy listening to the unfamiliar drum of the engine, watching the strange dashboard, learning her ways (I may as well tell you that seven notches below the bead seems to be the best adjustment for the carburetor intake-screw in the case of Dean Swift) to carefully examine the landscape or worry about split infinitives. Then, too, you have a clock on the dashboard, which is a new luxury in my motoring career; it is an eight-day-clock, and you may get to thinking, suppose you wind an eight-day-clock every Sunday, then once every eight weeks (wouldn't it be?) you should let her go a week without winding, to work off the excess torsion? Titania and I stopped the Dean in a pine-woods along the Middle Country Road to argue that out. Driving a new car is very like being young, which is only driving a new mind and body through life. You are likely to be so eagerly absorbed in your own mechanisms that you don't really pay proper attention to the meaning of what is around you. All the time you have the feeling, some day I'll do this again, thoughtfully, and study the significance of it. But suppose you aren't going to have any chance to do it again?

So I had better tell you at once how lovely is the Middle Country Road. The general human

habit of keeping to the main highway is a great consolation to those who always hunt out the roads marked second-rate in the maps. So when everyone else, at the romantic hamlet of Smithtown Branch, bears left on the concrete pike to Port Jeff, the Dean (whose garage, by the way, is called the Deanery; and if you're disturbed by the idea of a female Dean you need only think of Bryn Mawr College) the Dean keeps straight on into the strange and barren peace of the Middle Country. I think it is there (the map is not handy as I write) that you reach the hamlet of Coram; but it is not Coram Populo, for all that region is rather desolate. What beautiful little old farm-houses, deserted and crumbling by the way, where lilacs still in the doorway bloom! And queer tiny forgotten cemeteries; in one of these a waggon and two white horses were standing; Titania said (I was looking at the oil-gauge just then) they were digging up the graves. She remembered the white horses of Rosmersholm. I always spell it waggon, because (this is the Urchin's pun) every waggon ought to have a geegee.

There was something curiously metaphysical about our little voyage. First the Friend's Meeting House at Jericho. Then West Hills, where Walt was born. Then, as I am telling you, the exquisitely forlorn quality of the Middle Country Road (*medio tutissimus ibis*). At sunset time you come into Riverhead where the friendly and humorous proprietor of the old Griffin House makes you welcome. In the hotel you will find a facsimile of what purports to be a liquor license once issued to Abraham Lincoln. In the dining room Mary the waitress, with an excellent Long Island twang, announces suddenly over your shoulder "We have steak, lamb chops, veal cutlet, fried clams, fried eels." And in the pine-woods along the bay, at dusk, the whippoorwills are shrilling, like a flexible switch flogged in air.

D— M— and I were quite safe in describing the island of our story, because it is private property anyway and small chance of anyone checking us up. But the other island in that bay, Shelter Island, is very much as I had imagined it and certainly an enchanting place. The cheerful young ferryman at the South Ferry on Shelter Island had been on the island of our story, and told me of its charms, of its woods full of deer and its steep clay cliffs. He is a student of thunderstorms, too, and told how the tides alter the behavior of electrical storms in that narrow gut; and how a young farmer in the neighborhood was killed by lightning recently while taking a bath in a galvanized tub under an electric light fixture.

But the real goal of our pilgrimage was Montauk, which was as surprising to me as almost everything is when you see it for yourself. As far as Amagansett the South Shore highway, superb of its kind, is almost distressingly point-device. The Hamptons are all ye'd up: even Uncle Sam lends his approval: I could hardly believe the inscription *Ye Easthampton Post Office*. At Southampton I think my eye caught a sign on Agawam Pond about Not Luring The Swans. That would bar out Leda. The delightful windmills of the Hamptons have mostly lost their sails: perhaps someone has been tilting at them.

But beyond Amagansett the Dean found herself, in a gathering fog, on a queer undulating way among wild sand dunes and heathy moors. For many miles that strange road twists and thank-you-maams in the desert. Under the cliffs the surf roared in dim vagues of milk and pearl; and when at last we reached the lighthouse and shut off the motor a savage lonely voice came bursting through the fog. It was the siren; an odd name for such a melancholy warning cry. One could not help remembering that it was here, along these lonely beaches, that Walt Whitman used to shout *Shakespeare* at the storm.*

Coming home next morning, in the clear sunlight of the Shinnecock Hills, just as we were approaching a big truck, I saw—too late to do anything—a fine big yellow and black turtle crawling out onto the road. I'm afraid that he was going exactly into the path of those great flat wheels. And another omen led me to fear the worst had happened. That afternoon we were spinning gently along the Motor Parkway; which, as the signs remind you, is reserved for Pleasure Vehicles. Behind us came a roaring, a car shot past the Dean at twice our speed. It was a hearse.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

*Wasn't it Coney Island? The Editors.

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Books of Special Interest**The Prophets**

THE PROPHETS AND THEIR TIMES.

By J. M. POWIS SMITH. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1925. \$2.25.

Reviewed by HENRY J. CADBURY
Harvard University

NO part of Biblical study is better supplied with readable English handbooks than the Old Testament Prophets. Nevertheless we are glad to welcome another to the list from the pen of Professor Smith of Chicago. The author's familiarity with the field is attested by his earlier books and articles and is evident from his treatment of the theme in the several chapters of the present publication. He is in touch with recent commentaries and histories and embodies some new data such as the changed date of the fall of Nineveh. (His dates for the later Greek period should have been more carefully verified or else omitted entirely.) He refers also to the interesting new departures into the investigation of prophetic psychology, but makes no fresh adventures of his own in this direction.

In such a book new departures are perhaps not in place. The emphasis is partly upon the political circumstances in which the prophets lived, partly upon their message. The latter requires the use and interpretation of the Hebrew text, which because of corruption, obscurity, and interpolation presents extremely difficult problems. Here Professor Smith does not burden the reader with technicalities or debates. He quietly adopts decisions in accord with current scholarship. Often he follows the excellent modern custom in such books of printing important citations *in extenso*. Though the method is historical rather than biographical the experiences of the pre-exilic prophets are made to yield a certain amount of personal portraiture which will engage the interest of the reader. In the later and anonymous literature this gives place to a rather more tedious method, the mere analysis of subject matter. The later apocalyptic of the Old Testament is legitimately inserted at the conclusion, but it is only a concession to canonical tradition which permits the inclusion under the title of the volume of the tales of Jonah and of Daniel.

The general impressions on the reader of this book will be various, but no one will fail to see how directly the prophets' message was intended for the nation rather than for individuals. The prophets dealt with politics and made foreign affairs a principal concern. Their approach was religious and moral and from this combination they developed not only admirable ideals of statesmanship but many of their most sublime religious conceptions. It is interesting to note that spiritual religion would not have developed if the modern demand to keep politics out of religion had been followed. On the contrary, it was precisely the prophets' interest in social and political problems which gave them religious insight and moral earnestness such as philosophical speculation or ethical reasoning can never attain. Although Professor Smith does not draw the modern inferences from his narrative he is evidently aware of them and the sympathetic reader will catch them too. He will understand the superior patriotism of the defeatist Jeremiah and will kindle to the program of the famous Servant Songs in the later chapters of Isaiah before which, as Professor Smith well says, "our 100 per cent Americanism shudders in terror." The problem of post-war luxury is more insistent in our days than in those of Amos, while the complexity of our life makes it quite as difficult for us as for these ancient spokesmen of Jehovah to reach a confidence in the goodness and the justice of God. For

these reasons as well as for its capable presentation of the principal facts ascertained by competent scholarship in this field this new handbook may be commended both for students and for the general reader.

A Little Known Land

MADAGASCAR: LAND OF THE MAN-EATING TREE. By CHASE SALMON OSBORN. New York: Republic Publishing Co. 1924. \$2.25.

Reviewed by REXFORD W. BARTON.

MARCO Polo, in the course of his travels, visited the great island of Madagascar (and gave it the name by which it is now known on the maps of the world) and was promptly discredited for his remarks about it; it has been known to the Persians and Arabs for untold centuries and was the home of the great Roc of the "Arabian Nights", the tremendous *apyornis*, but recently extinct, twice the size of an ostrich whose eggs, forty inches in circumference, are still to be found. In 1510 the Portuguese, with their ready gift for acquisition, claimed its discovery; the American clippers and whalers out of New Bedford and Salem knew Madagascar well and left their imprint on the Malagassy in enriching their language with the word *jaka* from *jaktar* which now means salted or preserved meat; Captain Kidd used its sheltering bays and bights from which to launch many a free-booting expedition; Benjamin Franklin inadvertently sponsored an expedition whose purpose was to overthrow the small French colony at the same time that he was negotiating with the French for aid during our Revolution; today Madagascar is one of the most valuable and most beautiful colonies of France, yet it is still, at least to Americans, a little-known land, and is constantly being rediscovered.

Mr. Chase Salmon Osborn has made the most recent re-discovery and, of the many strange places he has visited and studied, he finds this "singularly continental" island all in all, ethnologically, anthropologically, zoologically, geologically, historically, and romantically the most interesting. He approaches his subject from the point of view of a student familiar with the sciences necessary to an honest understanding of the material with which he is confronted. And, like the student, his work gives ample evidence of considerable research. But his book is not essentially in the nature of a treatise; it is a narrative; opinion interspersed with fact with ready sympathy and understanding of the problems of a people of undetermined origin whose traditions and insular history give them a distinct unity and make them worthy of a separate chapter in the long chronicle of the world's development.

Although we cannot always agree with the analogous conclusions that Mr. Osborn draws, and though they sometimes appear a bit captious, they are well to consider, some of them seriously, and they add unusual enjoyment to a most engrossing travel book.

No review would be complete without a mention of the numerous interesting photographs and the tracing of the old map, *Carte de Madagascar par Gastaldo* (1560), that appears as a frontispiece. And, because of the third sentence in the book, we must forgive the author its sub-title. "... I am going to tell you that the purpose of the title of this chapter is at once to mesh your interest. . . . I do not know whether this tigerish tree really exists or whether the bloodcurdling stories about it are pure myth." But he tells the story as set down by a Pole in 1878 who claimed to be an eye-witness of this carnivorous plant. Marco Polo would rattle his bones could he but know the "scoop" he had missed.



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