

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

VOLUME II

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 1926

NUMBER 45

Scholarship

RESEARCH is always on the tongue of university presidents, but we hear less of scholarship. That shamed doubt as to the ultimate value of literary history or linguistic science which lurks at the heart of all universities takes courage at the sight of print. Those who lack the imagination to estimate the imponderable results of scholarship can count pages and note the discovery of important or trivial facts. Pamphlets, monographs, books, can be named in bibliographies, have the look, at least, of permanence, like a college dormitory or a monument. Alas, there is no permanence in them. Research sheds its tiny beam of light and then goes out, like a match struck to show the path by night. The great works which distinguished our elders, the first American scholars, gather dust in the libraries, but their life has gone into later books; the thousand bits of snapped-up, unconsidered knowledge, having testified once that their makers were "producing scholars," turn yellow in oblivion.

Scholarship means more than discovery. Scholarship is the scholarly mind, which may at will make books or men. The consummate fruit of scholarship may be a great book, or it may be a generation taught to think straight and austerely. The ripe fruit of investigation comes late, is rare at best. What one may hope for in the learned world is not genius often, but true scholarship always, and whether published in paper covers or bound into the minds of learners is all one in the sight of the Lord, provided—a large proviso—that the printed document has the value of the trained mind.

American universities have not yet come to the side of the angels in this respect. They have been blind to the hours of thought and investigation used up in the teaching of youth, a task as exigent of scholarship as the editing of a text, and more productive. They have urged the young scholar to publish books because they were unable or unwilling to judge of his work with men, and wished evidence that could be read and passed on in a trice. They would rate a preacher by the sermons he printed, not the souls he saved. And they have asked that the young scholar should turn his scholarship into print at the very moment when, if he is a man and a real scholar, every ounce of energy is absorbed in preparation and in teaching. Of the two channels for the precious energy of scholarship it is print that leads towards recognition—and a professorship.

The born writer will write despite all handicaps, the born scholar will sooner or later harvest his discoveries in print, the born teacher will be a scholar also. Yet the platitude that good teachers will be good scholars should not be used to frighten into premature publication. The rewards of academic life should go to a scholarship not to be defined by numbered pages nor limited to the accumulation of facts. Good teaching requires scholarship, is itself scholarship. To say to the young man, go teach, perform an act of scholarship upon the young but do not go too far, restrain your zeal, conserve your energies, prove that you are a scholar by the recording of facts, however trivial, in print, or we will not believe in your scholarship, is to utter very serious nonsense. It is to cry on and off. It is to urge every man to do two things at once, and equally well. It is to send a youth into battle, and judge him by the cut of his uniform.

One of our great delusions is that we need more

Manhattan

By MARY WILLCOX

PARIS turns her face away. Stranger.
Stranger.
London is too old for me, and much too wise.
But here, with western wilfulness, here where was
a wilderness,
We've raised a sudden city that will take all eyes.

Mumbling, grumbling, he towers between the rivers,
Rooted in the grubby earth that's not quite dry,
Pathetic and exciting, like a dazed young giant,
Looking at his fingers, looking at the sky.

Wait. Watch. Something's going to happen.
See, he's reaching out his hand to pluck a pine
tree down!

No, nothing. Wonder has him.
What's the matter, monster, behind that troubled
frown?

Do something; hurry; for tick tick, irrevocably,
Tick tick, tick tick, time's sliding through.
There goes my little watching time. So long, young
Manhattan!

When you hang comets in your belt, say I told
you to!

This Week



"Edgar Allan Poe." Reviewed by
Norman Foerster.

"Franz Liszt." Reviewed by *Edward Burlingame Hill.*

"Thobbing." Reviewed by *Arthur W. Colton.*

"The Pageant of America." Reviewed by *Allan Nevins.*

"Two or Three Graces." Reviewed by *Montgomery Belgion.*

"Jorgensen." Reviewed by *Robert MacDougall.*

"Rough Justice." Reviewed by *Edward Davidson.*

"The Red Gods Call." Reviewed by *Stephen Vincent Benét.*

Next Week, or Later

Visions of Empire. By *H. M. Tomlinson.*

published research from American universities. The quantity (not the quality) is already twice too great. What we need, and need bitterly, is more scholarship soundly based and rightly directed, and we need it most, not in books or other monuments to reputation, but in the classroom where are its greatest victories, and best chances for enduring service. If universities can recognize the scholarly mind only when they see it bound and printed, let them call in a psychologist, or begin to use their own good common sense.

Science and Poetry

By I. A. RICHARDS
Author of "Literary Criticism"

EVER since man first grew self-conscious and reflective he has supposed that his feelings, his attitudes, and his conduct spring from his knowledge; that as far as he could it would be wise for him to organize himself in this way, with knowledge as the foundation on which should rest feelings, attitudes, and behavior. In point of fact, he never has been so organized, knowledge having been until recently too scarce; but he has constantly been persuaded that he was built on this plan, and has endeavored to carry the structure further on these lines. He has sought for knowledge, supposing that it would itself directly excite a right orientation to existence, supposing that, if he only knew what the world was like, this knowledge in itself would show him how to feel towards it, what attitudes to adopt, and with what aims to live. He has constantly called what he found in this quest, "knowledge," unaware that it was hardly ever pure, unaware that his feelings, desires, attitudes, and behavior were already orientated by his physiological and social needs, and were themselves, for the most part, the sources of whatever it was that he supposed himself to be knowing.*

Suddenly, not long ago, he began to get genuine knowledge on a large scale. The process went faster and faster; it snowballed. Now he has to face the fact that the edifices of supposed knowledge, with which he has for so long buttressed and supported his attitudes, will no longer stand up, and, at the same time, he has to recognize that pure knowledge is neutral as regards his aims, that it has no direct bearing upon what he should feel, or what he should attempt to do.

For science, which is simply our most elaborate way of pointing to things systematically, tells us and can tell us nothing about the nature of things in any ultimate sense. It can never answer any question of the form: What is so and so? it can only tell us how so and so behaves. And it does not attempt to do more than this. Nor, indeed, can more than this be done. Those ancient, deeply troubling, formulations that begin with "What" and "Why" prove, when we examine them, to be not questions at all; but requests—for emotional satisfaction. They indicate our desire not for knowledge but for assurance, a point which appears clearly when we look into the "How" of questions and requests, of knowledge and desire. Science can tell us about man's place in the universe and his chances; that the place is precarious, and the chances problematical. It can enormously increase our chances if we can make wise use of it. But it cannot tell us what we are or what this world is; not because these are in any sense insoluble questions, but because they are not questions at all. And if science cannot answer these pseudo-questions no more can poetry, philosophy, or religion. So that all the varied answers which have for ages been regarded as the keys of wisdom are dissolving together.

The result is a biological crisis which is not likely to be decided without trouble. It is one

*A fuller explanation of the positions here adopted will be found in the writer's *Science and Poetry* to be published during the course of the present month by the W. W. Norton Publishing Co., Inc. (New York).

which we can perhaps decide for ourselves, partly by thinking, partly by reorganizing our minds in other ways; if we do not it may be decided for us, not in the way we should choose. While it lasts it puts a strain on each individual and upon society, a strain which is part of the explanation of many modern difficulties, the difficulties of the poet in particular.

It will be admitted—by those who distinguish between scientific statement, where truth is ultimately a matter of verification as this is understood in the laboratory, and emotive utterance, where “truth” is primarily acceptability by some attitude, and more remotely is the acceptability of this attitude itself—that it is not the poet’s business to make true statements. Yet poetry has constantly the air of making statements, and important ones; which is one reason why some mathematicians cannot read it. They find the alleged statements to be false. It will be agreed that their approach to poetry and their expectations from it are mistaken and that these apparent statements which occur in poetry are not to be handled in the same way as the real statements of science. Let us call them, to mark the difference, pseudo-statements, or fictions, but not in Vaihinger’s sense.

Scientific statements, like the pseudo-statements of poetry, do of course constantly touch off attitudes and action. Our daily practical existence is largely guided by them, and on the whole true statements are of more service to us than false ones. None the less we do not and, at present, cannot order our emotions and attitudes by true statements alone. We cannot build our poetry out of science. Nor is there any probability that we shall ever contrive to do so. This is one of the great new dangers to which civilization is exposed. Countless pseudo-statements about the universe, about human nature, the relations of mind to mind, about the soul, its rank and destiny—pseudo-statements which are pivotal points in the organization of the mind, vital to its well-being, have suddenly become impossible for sincere, honest, and informed minds to believe. For centuries they have been believed; now they are gone, irrevocably; and the knowledge which has killed them is not of a kind upon which an equally fine organization of the mind can be based.



This is the contemporary situation. The remedy, since there is no prospect of our gaining adequate knowledge, and since indeed it is fairly clear that genuine knowledge cannot serve us here and can only increase our practical control of Nature, is to cut our pseudo-statements free from belief, and yet retain them, in this released state, as the main instruments by which we order our attitudes to one another and to the world. Not so desperate a remedy as may appear, for poetry conclusively shows that even the most important among our attitudes can be aroused and maintained without any belief entering in at all. The attitudes of Tragedy, for example. We need no beliefs, and indeed we must have none, if we are to read “King Lear.” Pseudo-statements to which we attach no belief such as occur in poetry and statements proper such as science provides cannot conflict. It is only when we introduce illicit beliefs into poetry that danger arises. To do so is from this point of view a profanation of poetry.

Yet an important branch of criticism which has attracted the best talents from prehistoric times until today consists of the endeavor to persuade men that the functions of science and poetry are identical, or that the one is a “higher form” of the other, or that they conflict and we must choose between them.

The root of this persistent endeavor is clear. If we give to a pseudo-statement the kind of unqualified acceptance which belongs by right only to certified scientific statements, if we can contrive to do this, the impulses and attitudes with which we respond to it gain a notable stability and vigor. Briefly, if we can contrive to believe poetry, then the world *seems*, while we do so to be transfigured. It used to be comparatively easy to do this, and the habit has become well established. With the extension of science and the neutralization of nature it has become difficult as well as dangerous. Yet it is still alluring; it has many analogies with drug-taking. Hence the endeavors of the critics referred to. Various subterfuges have been devised along the lines of regarding Poetic Truth as figurative, symbolic; or as more immediate, as a truth of Intuition, not of reason, or as a higher form of the same truth as reason yields. Such attempts

to use poetry as a denial or as a corrective of science are very common. One point can be made against them all: they are never worked out in detail. There is no equivalent to Mill’s “Logic” expounding any such view. The language in which they are framed is usually a blend of obsolete psychology and emotive exclamations.

The long-established and much-encouraged habit of giving to emotive utterances—whether pseudo-statements simple, or looser and larger wholes taken as saying something figuratively—the kind of assent which we give to established facts, has for most people debilitated a wide range of their responses. A few scientists, caught young and brought up in the laboratory, are free from it; but then, as a rule, they pay no serious attention to poetry. For most men the recognition of the neutrality of nature brings about—through this habit—a divorce from poetry. They are so used to having their responses propped up by beliefs, however vague, that when these shadowy supports are removed they are no longer able to respond. Their attitudes to so many things have been forced in the past, over-encouraged. And when the world-picture ceases to assist there is a collapse. Over whole tracts of natural emotional response we are today like a bed of dahlias whose sticks have been removed. And this effect of the neutralization of nature is only in its beginnings. Consider the probable effects upon love-poetry in the near future of the kind of inquiry into basic human constitution exemplified by psycho-analysis.



A sense of desolation, of uncertainty, of futility, of the groundlessness of aspirations, of the vanity of endeavor, and a thirst for a life-giving water which seems suddenly to have failed, are the signs in consciousness of this necessary reorganization of our lives. Our attitudes and impulses are being compelled to become self-supporting; they are being driven back upon their biological justification, made once again sufficient to themselves. To those familiar with Mr. Eliot’s “The Waste Land,” my indebtedness to it at this point will be evident. He seems to me by this poem, to have performed two considerable services for this generation. He has given a perfect emotive description of a state of mind which is probably indescribable for a while to all meditative people. Secondly, by effecting a complete severance between his poetry and all beliefs, and this without any weakening of the poetry, he has realized what might otherwise have remained largely a speculative possibility, and has shown the way to the only solution of these difficulties. “In the destructive element immerse. That is the way.” A great deal of poetry can, of course, be written for which total independence of all beliefs is an easy matter. But it is never poetry of the more important kind, because the temptation to introduce beliefs is a sign and measure of the importance of the attitudes involved. At present it is not primarily religious beliefs, in the stricter sense of the word, which are most likely to be concerned. Emphases have altered surprisingly. University societies founded fifteen years ago, for example, to discuss religion, are usually found to be discussing sex today. And serious love poetry, which is independent of beliefs of one kind or another, traditional or eccentric, is rare.

Yet the necessity for independence is increasing. This is not to say that traditional poetry, into which beliefs readily enter, is becoming obsolete; it is merely becoming more and more difficult to approach without confusion; it demands a greater imaginative effort, a greater purity in the reader.

We must distinguish here, however. There are many feelings and attitudes which, though in the past supported by beliefs now untenable, can survive their removal because they have other, more natural, supports and spring directly from the necessities of existence. To the extent to which they have been undistorted by the beliefs which have gathered round them they will remain as before. But there are other attitudes which are very largely the product of belief and have no other support. These will lapse if the changes here alluded to continue. With their disappearance some forms of poetry—much minor devotional verse, for example—will become obsolete. And with the unravelling of the intellect *versus* emotion entanglement, there will be cases where even literature to which immense value has been assigned—the speculative portions of the work of Dostoevsky may be instanced—will lose much of its interest, except for the history of

the mind. It was because he belonged to our age that Dostoevsky had to wrestle so terribly in these toils.

A pioneer in modern research upon the origins of culture was asked recently whether his work had any bearing upon religion. He replied that it had, but that at present he was engaged merely in “getting the guns into position.” The same answer might be given with regard to the probable consequences of recent progress in psychology, not only for religion but for the whole fabric of our traditional beliefs about ourselves. In many quarters there is a tendency to suppose that the series of attacks upon received ideas which began, shall we say, with Galileo and rose to a climax with Darwinism, has overreached itself with Einstein and Eddington, and that the battle is now due to die down. This view seems to be too optimistic. The most dangerous of the sciences is only now beginning to come into action. I am thinking less of psycholanalysis or of behaviorism than of the whole subject which includes them. It is very probable that the Hindenburg Line to which the defense of our traditions retired as a result of the onslaughts of the last century will be blown up in the near future. If this should happen a mental chaos such as man has never experienced may be expected. We shall then be thrown back, as Matthew Arnold foresaw, upon poetry. It is capable of saving us; it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos. But whether man is capable of the reorientation required, whether he can loosen in time the entanglement with belief which now takes from poetry half its power and would then take all, is another question, and too large to be entered upon here.

The Case of Poe

EDGAR ALLAN POE: A Study in Genius. By JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1926. \$3.

Reviewed by NORMAN FOERSTER
University of North Carolina

AS books go, this is an extremely interesting and able book. As biographies of Poe go, it is the most important contribution since George Edward Woodberry’s scholarly life. Although it by no means supplants Mr. Woodberry’s life, its value may be indicated by saying that it will have to be seriously reckoned with by all future biographers of Poe.

The book is not in the ordinary sense a biography at all, but, as the sub-title denotes, a study in genius. Mr. Krutch inclines to the view that all works of genius come into being essentially as Poe’s did, and that in him we have merely an especially clear example of the creative process. His was an exaggerated case of genius; he was a “psychopathic case;” he is “inexplicable by the laws of normal psychology.” This, it appears, is true of the man and his works alike: “It is just the persistent attempt to separate these two inseparable things which has stood more than anything else in the way of the complete understanding of either.”

So nearly identical (indeed) are the man and his writings that to wish any difference in either the character or experience in the first is to wish that the other had been different too; and since there is no reason to suppose that Poe would have written at all except as the result of a complete maladjustment to life, that would be also to wish that he had not, as a writer, existed at all.

The key, then, to both Poe and his work lies in the idea of self-expression. What was the nature of the self that he expressed so “wildly well”? Apparently his most important heritage from his father’s side was “an inclination toward alcohol” and from his mother’s side the dark taint which made his sister “a harmless imbecile.” As his heritage was sinister, so was his environment. His childhood was a tragic “conflict between a pride constantly nourished and yet continually wounded by a sense that as the son of an outcast and as a dependent not even sure of his patron he had no right to it.” He suffered from a sense of inferiority, and seemingly also, as he grew up, from a sexual impotence presumably connected with the “baneful fascination” exercised over his mind by the memory of his mother. Then, too, “the haughty and reckless spirit of the old Southern aristocracy” that he imbibed at the University of Virginia was “poison” in his case, causing his insecure pride to grow apace. “These University days were, indeed, the beginning of the first stage of Poe’s lifelong flight from himself.” He could not control the