

parative anatomy of the mammals, the vertebrates, and latterly the protozoa. After these introductory reflections we can hardly do better than turn over to the reader Spengler's own key to his work.

Present-day historians think they are performing a work of supererogation in bringing in religious and social, or even art-history, as details to "illustrate" the political sense of an epoch. But the decisive factor—decisive, that is, in so far as visible history is the expression, sign, and embodiment of the soul [Seelenthum]—they forget. I have not hitherto found one who has carefully considered the *morphological relationship* that inwardly binds together the expression-forms of all branches of a Culture, who has gone beyond politics to grasp the ultimate and fundamental ideas of Greeks, Arabians, [East] Indians, and Westerners in mathematics, the meaning of their early ornamentation, the basic forms of their architecture, philosophies, drama, and lyrics, their choice and development of great arts, the details of their craftsmanship and choice of materials—let alone have appreciated the decisive importance of these matters for the form-problems of history.

Who amongst them realizes that between differential calculus and the dynastic principle of politics in the age of Louis XIV, between the classical city-state and the Euclidean geometry, between the space-perspective of Western oil painting and the conquest of space by railroad, telephone, and long-range weapons, between contrapuntal music and credit economies, there are deep uniformities? Yet, viewed from this morphological standpoint, even the humdrum facts of politics assume a symbolic and even a metaphysical character, and—what has perhaps been impossible hitherto—things such as the Egyptian administrative system, the classical coinage, analytical geometry, and cheque, the Suez canal, the block printing of the Chinese, the Prussian army, and the Roman road-engineering can all alike be viewed as symbols and interpreted as such.

This *massenhaft* program would certainly drive most historians into their cyclone cellars. One can readily see, however, why one with an almost preternatural book-knowledge can fill two volumes with the "symbols" and the interpretation thereof. Spengler says we must proceed by *analogy* in setting forth a real "world history" as distinguished from the spurious works that have previously paraded as such. In this way we achieve the "logic of time" and reach the perception of Destiny, "the deepest inward certainty, a fact that suffuses all mythological religions and artistic thought and constitutes the whole essence and kernel of history."

There is a period of youth, the prime of life and old age in all civilizations, and we are in the last period. The sooner we realize this the better. We can take it or leave it. Spengler ends his work with the ominous *Ducunt fata volentem, nolentem trahunt*—the fates gently lead those with insight, but inexorably drag along the fool. Such is the outcome of this particular fable!

It was the custom in former times to jot down in a so-called "common place" book such apposite quotations and reflections as happened to come in the writer's way. Mrs. Thrale, as my friend Percival Merritt has delightfully shown us, called her commonplace book "Minced meat for Pyes." The "Downfall of the Land of the Setting Sun" is a commonplace book which is not at all commonplace. He who ventures into it will be wise to refrain from the usual tendency to think too damned quick. He would better not set out with the idea of pronouncing this and that right or wrong, true or untrue. He will find plenty of wonderment. His mind will be set going, and that is always the main thing.

Carolina Dunes

ADVENTURES IN GREEN PLACES. By HERBERT RAVENEL SASS. New York: Minton, Balch & Co. \$2.50.

Reviewed by H. W. BOYNTON

I HAVE a shelf or two happily devoted to "nature writers," which is surely an abominable term for a highly estimable company. There abide Walton and Jefferies and Thoreau and Burroughs, Muir and Torrey and Olive Thorne Miller and Dallas Lore Sharp. And there shall dwell henceforth "Adventures in Green Places." It is a book which carries on all the fine traditions of the writers who in all periods have found their theme in the drama of extra-human life on a man-ridden globe. And it has the advantage of a new or little explored range, for most American "nature-writing" has belonged to the East or the North or the far West. Mr. Sass's hunting-ground lies among the dunes and swamps of the Carolinas, in what he calls the "Low Country." It is a country haunted by memories of grandeur, its wilderness holding the ruins of great plantation houses, its "barrier isles" the dim wreckage of summer plaisance, in the days of Charleston's greatness.

Upon this melancholy note of departed glory one or two papers dwell, as in "Dragon Music and

Ghosts." The dragon music is the rare and fitful morning chorus of the alligators from the Carolina backwaters. The ghosts are the ghosts of that ancient régime: "Dawn and dusk are the best times in the old plantation country, for it is a country full of old wistful memories and wraiths out of the past."

But most of our adventures are adventures among the living, the birds and reptiles who were at home in these green places before humans began to intrude, and will be at home there, no doubt, when many another human régime and dispensation has passed to nothing. Some of these wild races have been menaced and brought almost to extinction by the heedlessness of man. Mr. Sass's supreme adventure was to discover two island breeding-places of the snowy egret, and by getting legal protection for them, of assuring the rapid increase of that beautiful and almost extinct species. Alligators, snakes, and the lizard tribe are among the wild folk celebrated in these papers, but it is clear that the writer's great enthusiasm is for the free and expert creatures of air celebrated in "Great Soaring Birds" and elsewhere often throughout these pages. He is a devoted admirer of the eagle, and the other mighty flyers. It is perhaps a sense of jealousy for one's own which makes me feel that he does less than justice to that magnificent soarer who dwells (or condescends to nest) on my own salt water acres,—the osprey.

A Generation's Spokesman

THE PORTRAIT OF A GENERATION. By ROBERT McALMON. Three Mountains Press: Paris, Ile Saint-Louis, Quai d'Anjou, 29. 1926.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THIS book is one of two hundred that have been printed, ten of which are on Verge d'Arches paper, numbered 1 to 10. Mr. McAlmon's "Distinguished Air" was printed on Arches paper also and retailed at four dollars. He has written five books, and, according to Mr. Ernest Walsh, "there is not one bad book in the five. And he hasn't looked at all the world yet but he is going to." I am glad to hear that. In the meanwhile Mr. McAlmon gives us "The Portrait of a Generation." His last book was a fairy story.

In his review of Mr. McAlmon's "Distinguished Air," which I must otherwise try to put out of my mind, because now is no time for mirth and laughter, Mr. Walsh said one thing of interest. He remarked that Robert McAlmon, Emanuel Carnevali, and Ethel Moorhead had all "gone back to the old and first manner of writing which gave us English literature. It is the school that writes by instinct and creates its own language as it writes." It is a homespun prose, Mr. Walsh thinks, rather than a machine-made prose. Therefore "the design is not mean."

I have examined proof of this statement by reading Mr. McAlmon's "extract," "Transcontinental," in *This Quarter*. I suppose one may get a fair idea of Mr. McAlmon's prose from his extract. "Transcontinental" is not particularly well written. It bears little trace of style. But it presents its rather uninteresting young people, in their undergraduate environment, in a perfectly lucid fashion. In its way it is "the portrait of a generation," at least of that fraction of a generation that tediously speculates upon poetry and sex on the Pacific Coast, in certain institutions of learning. They are a crass lot, and depressing, but Mr. McAlmon's rather heavy portayal of them is somewhat interesting documentation.

It is "homespun prose" indubitably. But in that fact seems to me to reside no especial virtue. As to the "old and first manner of writings," that is chiefly buncombe. What possible relationship does this rather undistinguished flat-footed prose bear, for instance, to Gower and "Piers Plowman"? Such work might, perhaps, be taken as example of "the old and first," at least in English literature. Gower and Langland wrote by instinct—and who does not? As for creating their own language, they used the language that lay about them, used it so that they might be understood, tried, over and above this, to use it aptly and beautifully. Mr. McAlmon uses the language that lies about him, in his prose—uses it so that he may be understood; does not use it with any particular sensitivity. But that is all there is to this nonsense about creating one's own language.

However, this is supposedly a review of a book of poems as they are called by Mr. McAlmon, not

of his prose. In "The Portrait of a Generation," he is far from lucid. That seems to have become the new function of poetry (as it is spoken of) to pose riddles, to be as elliptical as possible, to make confusion worse confounded. In this Mr. McAlmon succeeds as well as many of his compeers. He is in the movement, in the turbid stream.

I quote from "Neurotic Correspondence":

One cannot stay forever in one place.
A rainy day depresses or the sun is stark.
You write from Paris or the South of France
en route to where,
as he is planning then a trip to Spain
or Warsaw.

This is, of course, not even comprehensible prose. But incoherence is the aim, notably achieved. And then, there is "the incontrovertible statement," such as:

You say much the same thing
of London and of Paris
you both have said before.

So interesting! But it is all rightly in "the portrait of a generation," because of its vast *fin de siècle* lassitude. (Who could dream, from this, that there is anything exhilarating in the age, or that we are in reality beginning the second quarter of the twentieth century?) "Neurotic correspondence"—an excellent title for much of the poetry of this age! It is excessively tiring because it is so tired.

That one sample is, of course, unfair to McAlmon. Let us proceed. We come to romances. The first is unsavory, and a fact.

a fact erected as a fact
as architecture good bad
or indifferent
with no passionate need of conviction.

As to the second romance. We don't gleam much from the presentation of Karen, except that Mr. McAlmon is altruistically serving as "tutor to under-intelligent and mostly imbecilic fools, who don't know what the question is about." We don't.

We proceed—to an historical reminiscence (old stale scandal) concluded with a brief meditation upon the iron resources of Lapland and Siberia and the possibilities of future North Pole exploration. An "emphatic decision" concerning Mussolini is followed by "What does one do?" (tired eternal question), by more romances and neurotic correspondence (the coloratura prima donna alone supplying color), by more neurotic correspondence and tawdry romances, by a perfect scream of an historical reminiscence (I'm sure) mixed with the surge of machinery and the trick whistle of Kate from the Barbary Coast, by talk of Einstein and Böhme and international politics, and Coccu the Spanish dancer, and the Zinovieff letter, and man-and-monkey, and Bordeaux, and the "steel-brittle Aphrodite of machinery." It is all, of course, utterly disjointed, this "Revolving Mirror," followed by "Fragments and Miscellany," by "Jewels, Vegetables and Flesh," by a fair account of a bull-fight, by "Contemporary Irritations and Didactics."

So "the generation" sits in its *café* in Paris, and its eyelids have grown more than a little weary. There is no health in us. The world revolves in the revolving mirror. The mind is a mere kaleidoscope of preposterous patterns, ever shifting and reforming. The news of the day, the babble of small-talk, amorous memories. Language is a mere box of anagram letters split all over a cracked marble table. Sex is a persistent thorn in suppurating flesh. Existence is drab, sad, and hopeless. Everything is stale and outworn. Remains the sneer. Remains the weary pastime of disconnected sentences. That is nepenthe. That is art. At least, all the art we have. The world is still shell-shocked.

"The portrait of a generation." But perhaps it is hardly that. Perhaps it is hardly as bad as all that!

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HENRY SEIDEL CANBY Editor
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT Associate Editor
AMY LOVEMAN Associate Editor
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY Contributing Editor

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Descartes's Letters

CORRESPONDENCE OF DESCARTES AND CONSTANTYN HUYGENS, 1635-1647. Edited from manuscripts now in the Bibliothèque Nationale. By LEON ROTH. New York: Oxford University Press. 1926. \$14.

Reviewed by DAVID EUGENE SMITH
Columbia University

SELDOM does there come to the reviewer's desk a more worthy contribution to human knowledge than this, or a better specimen of good construction, of literary taste, and of printer's art. That there should suddenly appear, almost from the unknown, a body of letters written by such a man as Descartes, filled with human interest, and preserved through three centuries by a kind of watchful providence, and that these should find a scholar whose tastes and abilities so well fit him to place them before the public, is a matter for surprise as well as for congratulation.

Upwards of twenty years ago Mr. L. H. Dudley Buxton, now lecturer in physical anthropology at Oxford, then a schoolboy, found among some family papers one hundred and twenty-six letters and documents relating to Descartes. Of these, sixty-three were autograph letters from him to Constantyn Huygens, father of Christian Huygens, the physicist. Prior to this discovery only about ninety-five autographs of Descartes had been found, so that over forty per cent of all known pieces are in this collection.

For nearly two centuries prior to 1825 this material had been in the possession of the van Sypestein family of Haarlem. It was sold, with other documents, by Sotheby in June, 1825, for Jonkheer C. A. van Sypestein, who had inherited it. It next appeared in the catalogue of Thomas Thorpe, a London bookseller, in 1833. There is some reason to think that the letters then passed through the hands of Charles Babbage, of calculating-machine fame; but in any case they later came into the possession of Harry Wilmot Buxton, after which they remained substantially unknown to the world for nearly a century and until discovered as above stated.



These letters are now published in full with short prolegomena and notes relating to the subject matter and to the persons and events mentioned. The editor has sought to harmonize the style with that adopted in tome I of the "Œuvres de Descartes" ("Correspondence"), edited by MM. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris, 1897), and it might be said that he could not have done better were it not for the fact that, typographically at least, he actually succeeded in improving upon his model.

The question naturally arises,—what does such a collection do for the world? What does it tell us that was not known before the contents of these letters were revealed? Do the pages advance the cause of philosophy, of science, of mathematics, or of any other branch of human knowledge in which the interests of Descartes were so pronounced? Perhaps the best answer that can be given is the one stated by M. Adam, who was, very appropriately, called upon to write the *Avant-Propos*: "On ne saurait exagérer la valeur de cette Correspondence de Descartes et de Huygens. Elle nous fait mieux connaître le philosophe, sinon sa philosophie même. Elle précise heureusement quelques traits de sa physiologie; elle nous montre, dans diverses circonstances de la vie, l'homme, sa personne, et son caractère."

Thus we are enabled to see, through these letters, more of the nature of the man, more of his thoughts, of his methods, of his life. At one time we see him pleading the cause of the unfortunate with the ardor of a Voltaire; at another he expresses his contempt for ingratitude in an individual and for the oppression inflicted by senseless laws; while at another he shows that even a philosopher can succumb to the lure of the chase. He appears, too, as the gallant, presenting copies of his scientific works to Madame de Zuylichem instead of to her husband (Huygens), his humor asserting itself by sending them unbound or, as he says, "tout nus," remarking that it is no longer the custom "de donner des robes aux enfants dès le premier jour qu'ils viennent au monde."

The letters also show him at work in the domain of medicine ("je travaille maintenant à composer un abrégé de médecine, que je tire en partie des livres et en partie de mes raisonnemens"); giving himself up to the study of chemistry; interested in botany and exchanging notes on the "ambrettes"; sympathetic

with poetry, and, naturally, devoting himself to physics, philosophy, and mathematics.

They also show Descartes as somewhat of an opportunist,—"de me regler sur les occurrences, et de suivre autant que je pourray les conseils les plus seurs et les plus tranquilles"; as a lover of the quiet life,—"C'est pourquoy ie philosophe icy fort paisiblement et à mon ordinaire, c'est à dire sans me haster"; and as one who philosophizes on everything—"Et comme vous sçavez que j'ay coutume de philosopher sur tout ce qui se presente." As M. Adam says, the letters reveal the human being, and this is a revelation always worth having.

Constantijn Huygens, or Sir Constantijn as we might call him, since he was knighted during his diplomatic service in London by James I, was a statesman, diplomat, linguist, poet, and musician, besides being blessed with an income sufficient for the life he was called upon to lead. He was private secretary to three successive Stadtholders and came to know all the leading scholars and statesmen of Holland in his time. He was (1633) a brother-in-law of David de Leu de Wilhelm, who was councilor to the Prince of Orange and a friend of Descartes, and to him Wilhelm introduced the latter in 1632. In May of that year Descartes wrote a note to his friend "Monsieur de Willhelme, Conseiller de Monr. le Prince d'Orange," at the Hague, which reads in part as follows:

Je ne sçay que respondre a la courtoisie de Monsieur Huygens sinon que ie cheris l'honneur de sa connoissance comme lune de mes meilleures fortunes, et que ie n'eseray iamais en lieu ou ie puisse auoir le bien de le voir que ie nen recherche les occasions ainsy que ie seray tousiours celles de vous tesmoigner que ie suis Monsieur Vostre tres humble et tres affectionné seruiteur Descartes.

Wilhelm forwarded this letter to Huygens and thus was opened the correspondence set forth in this book. The wanderings of this letter can be traced for a considerable period and, by an interesting coincidence, it is at present the property of this reviewer, whose interest in the collection, which was the result of its appreciative words, is thereby increased.

Scientific Mind Healing

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE. An Examination of the Religion of Health. By SIR WILLIAM BARRETT and ROSA M. BARRETT. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1926. \$1.75.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

HERE at last is a good book on Christian Science. It is written with the same objectivity and lack of prejudice to which we are accustomed in discussions of Egyptian or Babylonian religions but which we are not yet sufficiently civilized to exhibit ordinarily with regard to contemporary religious movements. Sir William Barrett and his sister are devout Christians who have been led by what seems to them convincing evidence to accept the reality of mental healing as fully as do the Christian Scientists themselves. They are therefore predisposed to be sympathetic. On the other hand, they have realized the necessity of a thorough investigation of their subject, and after making it, give their report without fear or favor. What, then, is their report?

In Mrs. Eddy these authors do not see Woodbridge Riley's "thrice-married female Trismegistus," arch-hypocrite and fraud, but a woman of undeniable sincerity, much energy, much determination, with a lofty spiritual ideal and a tremendous genius for practical organization. They give well-deserved praise to the *Christian Science Monitor* "started by Mrs. Eddy in 1908 for the purpose of giving general news in a wholesome way without any distinctive doctrinal aspect, and also without sensation or exploitation of vice; hence reports of murders, divorce cases, and so on, are wholly excluded. It is most ably edited. . . . No more wholesome or better conducted newspaper exists in the world." But, they urge, Mrs. Eddy was unfortunately a person of great weaknesses as well as great virtues, and her very ability caused these weaknesses to be even more productive of evil than they would otherwise have been. They feel that her avarice, megalomania, untruthfulness, and intellectual superficiality could not fail to affect the character of the movement which she originated.

The first accusation, although the one most frequently heard, is the one least substantiated by our authors. True, Mrs. Eddy charged each student in her "Metaphysical College" three hundred dollars for a course of twelve days' instruction—which

seems a little exorbitant; true, she placed an unusually high price on "Science and Health" and insisted that every member of the church should buy a copy; true, she was keen to go to law for the protection of her copyrights; but all this would pass unnoticed in any average "good citizen." There is little evidence that Mrs. Eddy loved money more than does the great majority of the human race. Possibly Keyserling is right in saying that American religious movements by uniting the ideals of material and spiritual success have made a revolutionary advance over similar movements in the past. Certainly the Christian Science argument that cures are more likely to occur when paid for is psychologically sound—we value more that for which we make some sacrifice. That very line of reasoning, however, may explain much of the antagonism to Mrs. Eddy. She made no sacrifice for her religion, but on the contrary became a millionaire by means of it; she suffered much, indeed,—from physical ill-health,—but she never suffered for humanity. In that she differs from nearly every other great religious leader.



Whatever one may think with regard to Mrs. Eddy's alleged avarice, megalomania is certainly writ large over all her work. She built up in a single life-time a more strongly centered spiritual autocracy than the Catholic Church was able to do in centuries. She herself directly prescribed the creed, the form of worship, and the organization of every Christian Science community throughout the world. To what avail her fine words, "I only ask my friends to look away from my personality and to fix their eyes on Truth," when she had forced them, by all the means in her power, to identify the two?

Her megalomania seems to have been responsible for much in her relations with Dr. Quimby, the Portland mesmerist and spiritual healer. Since the publication of the Quimby MSS. in 1921 there can be no question of her direct indebtedness to Quimby, whose patient she was, with whom she corresponded for three years, and whose unpublished writings are known to have been in her hands. From him she derived not only the phrases "Science of Health" and "Christian Science," but the fundamental principle of all her teaching. We find Quimby originating "Disease is an error," "Disease is a belief," "I destroy the disease by showing the error," and Mrs. Eddy paraphrasing—"Disease is a delusion," "It is a false belief," "The cure is effected by making the disease appear to be—what it really is—an illusion." Yet Mrs. Eddy in later years asserted that she owed nothing to Quimby and that he had never even used spiritual healing, thereby contradicting her own earlier statements made to him, to others, and in a public lecture of 1864 on "P. P. Quimby's Spiritual Healing."



It would be absurd, of course, to claim any great degree of intellectual power for either Quimby or Mrs. Eddy. Our authors rightly name their so-called metaphysics a "bastard idealism." True philosophic idealism, which draws all things within the circle of mind, by this very fact leaves the relationship of the parts unchanged; if matter is an idea, it is none the less real for that. Mrs. Eddy's pseudo-idealism, on the other hand, asserts that matter is unreal, while yet the unreal body may be clad in real clothes, eat real food, and receive all the benefits obtained from very real money.

The strength of Christian Science, according to our two authors, lies in its emphasis upon the fact of mental healing which they show to have been an integral part of the great majority of religious movements. Its weakness lies in its exclusive character: exclusive, first, in its position that mental healing is the only form of healing, whence its unnecessary and perilous opposition to medicine; exclusive, second, in its attempt to restrict all mental healing within the scheme laid down by Mrs. Eddy. "Knowledge and our apprehension of it must grow in religion as in everything else, and attempts made by various sects and religious bodies to check this growth can but result in their ultimate overthrow. Hence the funeral dirge of Christian Science was sounded in the very words used by Mrs. Eddy in the hope of preserving it for ever: 'Science and Health is the final revelation of the absolute Principle of Scientific Mind-healing.'"