

English Criticism

(Continued from page 606)

log-rolling. The Unsuccessful School is made up of men who are upon the fringe of literary productiveness but who have no settled place in the literary world. Such men do a great deal of reviewing. Their efforts are more likely to be individual than concerted. They will give help to other unsuccessful writers; but the moment non-success becomes success their bitterness is roused. It is then incessant. These are the men who are most sensitive to personal slights. They are indefatigable in repaying such slights. They have ingenuity and resource; and they may at all times so lose control of their pens as to allow splendid reviews to escape. Criticism from the Unsuccessful School is dingy and wayward. To those who live in London it is recognizable; and it can be discounted by them. To all who are unversed in reviewing, owing to the fact that so much reviewing is anonymous, it is incalculable and inexplicable. That is because it has little reference to the quality of the books noticed, but much to the personality of the writers of the books. So much for the anonymous review of the Unsuccessful School.



There is the Brilliant School. This is not—it could not be—a clique. It has few of the faults of a clique; but the reviews produced by the highly individual members of the school are written less to establish truth than to illustrate the brilliance of the writer. There is much that is very tempting to the egotist in such displays of wit. There is a great deal that is very enjoyable to the reader who likes verbal fireworks. There is at times, when the method is completely successful, a diabolical exposé of the victim's weakness. Nobody, in fact, can successfully write reviews of the brilliant kind without possessing an exceptionally adroit and flexible mind and pen. Accordingly, most of the members of the Brilliant School are unsuccessful. They strain after ingenuity, allusiveness, the scathing word, and they remain, to all appearance, undergraduates. I do not know whether it is the same in America; but in England, after spending some time in the society of undergraduates, I have come to the conclusion that their conversation is self-conscious rather than brilliant, and seldom so witty as to justify the triumphantly witty air of the speakers. This sense of strain (due to the evaporation of that confidence which the applause of similar wits supplies) drags the writer into pretentiousness. But this pretentiousness, even if it is insulting, has nothing of superciliousness in it. An undergraduate is only a boy, and boys are often bumptious from animal spirits. The post-graduate undergraduate means no harm. He is over-familiar, and apparently self-complacent, not from vice, but from incurable hobbledehoyishness. Forgive him. He is far from being as sure of himself as he seems.

And then we have what may be called the Serious School (I shall be accused, no doubt, of maliciously hinting "the Dull School," but this is not my intention). The members of this school make no effort after brilliance; but they take themselves seriously as critics and as moral and intellectual forces. I believe the members of this school to be honest, although they praise each other unstintedly; but they have a jealous eye upon those who are commercially more successful than themselves. To the approbation of the Serious School the first passport is poverty to the creative imagination. No novelist could ever have the full approval of the Serious School, because it is a commonplace with this school that novelists are specious and venal persons. But the essential visa to the passport is membership of the Serious School itself. The Serious School, among its various members, provides a fair proportion of the reviews which are published in the London press. One may distinguish its work, signed and unsigned, by its lack of brilliance and by its distribution of praise and blame. The Serious School may at times be brusque; it is never supercilious. It has a very hard row to hoe. Its policy is conservative; its bigotry is sometimes almost narrow-minded, its is unloved. For an enormous amount of hard and serious labor in the cause of approved modern authors it has derived less power and less credit (with more obloquy) than any other school or party.

The fourth school is a school of secondary brilliance. If it is never as pretentious as

the school of Undergraduate Brilliance, it is still a very smart school, bent upon having all the latest fashions from Paris. This is the Bloomsbury School. I think it would be impossible for anybody to say, as some might say of the Serious School, that the Bloomsbury School was dull. It is not dull, except in its works of fiction. It is costive, but it is not dull. All its members live upon borrowed ideas, of which they have not many; and none of them has very much to say. But having little to say each member of the Bloomsbury School has devoted much time and study to the way in which things should be said. Nowhere is the study of "prose" so assiduously pursued. The members of the Bloomsbury School are the ones who discovered good form in art. They have now persuaded themselves that nothing else matters. They have no delight in creative effort, which they do not understand. It seems to them something uncouth. They are so refined that the coarser world has no appeal to them. For the Bloomsbury School—with one eye fixed upon Paris—all is vulgar and provincial that lives outside Paris and Bloomsbury.

The Bloomsbury School suffers from intellectual inbreeding. It lives so definitely in a world of æsthetic notions, and is so entirely sterile and non-creative, that it falls back upon criticism as the only kind of mental activity which can fittingly be exercised by persons of intellectual refinement. But in Bloomsbury refinement and a delicate flutter of mutual admiration are found not incompatible. Nourished by the tabloids of good form which are its staple diet, gowned in the latest Paris fashion, Bloomsbury can take but a languid interest in what happens outside its two worlds. When these other activities do not exist for Bloomsbury, how is it possible that Bloomsbury could feel supercilious? It cannot feel supercilious. It cannot even feel interested.

I have now come to the end of the schools of reviewing with which I purpose dealing in this article. If my account has left the reader with the impression that there is very little good reviewing done in England, that will be, perhaps, a fair inference. But I hope I have made it clear that supercilious reviewing of American books is not and cannot be a general rule. Incapacity is common (in what country is it otherwise?), educational and social snobbishness is to be met with, wire-pulling is to be seen everywhere. Until all reviews are signed, and until the payment for reviews makes reviewing something other than the prey of the amateur and the hack, I see no chance that there will be any substantially satisfactory criticism in England. Nevertheless I should like to make one point very clear indeed. This is, that although cliques praise each other and sympathies tend to be narrow, there is extremely little conscious bad faith among English reviewers. They very rarely say anything which is of value to the author of the book they are criticizing, or to the public which seeks guidance in literary taste; but this is from incompetence, and not from any wilful perversion of fact or opinion. The real criticism of England is that which passes from lip to lip. In print, there may be much "gesture." It is the custom to praise certain writers, to belittle certain other writers. But just as the thing that sells books is talk (as we are often told) so talk is the thing that creates and maintains reputations. I do not suggest that this is as it should be; but in an age when books are published by the thousand there must be some means of detecting which of the writers of them are deserving of continued renown. The reviewers are submerged in their tasks and their commitments, and cannot see clear; the gossipers are all rushing to the latest fashion; what remains? The alternative, it seems to me, is the raising of criticism to the rank of art; the sweeping of all over-professional reviewers into Limbo; the encouragement of taste. But as these things are obviously impossible we are condemned to go on as we now are. It is a sad enough state; but are things so very much better elsewhere? Are they better in France? From my experience of French criticism I doubt it. In Germany? It seems not. In America? My readers will know better than I what is the condition of American literary criticism. Superciliousness, certainly, is not among the vices of American criticism; but it may be that some of the English defects which I have mentioned will be recognized as inseparable from a kind of writing which is so near the commercial side of an art. At any rate, I hope that what I have said will show some of those who have complained of the attitude of "English critics" that they have been doing injustice not only to a nation but also to a class within that nation which is torn by all sorts of perplexities and emotions, among which contempt for American letters does not find a place.

The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

Sale of Adam Library

IN a foreword to the catalogue of selections from the library of R. B. Adam of Buffalo, which were sold at the Anderson Galleries February 15 and 16, the owner said:

"Dreaming, smoking, thinking one evening in my library, I decided the time had come to separate my special, and some of my miscellaneous books, from that great period of literature, the eighteenth century, in which my chief interest endures, and give what I can spare of what remains to me of my days and nights to the study of the Johnsonian era. In a sense this is not a great collection; but many of the items cannot be surpassed for perfection, and quite a few are absolutely unique."

Collectors will be glad to know that Mr. Adam will concentrate upon his Johnsonian collection, already the finest of its kind in the world. If the selections sold in this sale did not constitute a great collection, they made, inside of its limitations, one of great distinction, for the 433 lots brought \$122,188, or \$282.17 per item, which is a very high average.

The highest price, \$11,500, was paid by Dr. Rosenbach for Milton's "Comus," small 4to, levant morocco by Bedford, London, 1637, a very fine copy of the excessively rare first edition. The next highest price, \$10,000, was paid by Byrne Hackett of the Brick Row Book Shop, for Milton's "Paradise Lost," small 4to, original sheep, in protecting covers made from a rafter in a room in Milton's house at Westminster, fastened with brass clasps, a remarkably fine copy of the rare first edition, with the first title-page, some of the edges untrimmed, with the genuine blank end leaves. This is the famous Britwell Library copy.

Other excessively rare and valuable lots and the prices realized were the following: Burns. James Beattie's "Poems on Several Occasions," small 8vo, contemporary calf, Edinburgh, 1776. Once owned by Robert Burns, with an inscription by the poet. \$2,800.

Dickens (Charles). "Pickwick Papers," in the original 20 parts in 19, 8vo, London, 1837. Contains all of the addresses, notices, inserts, and advertisements which have come of late years to be regarded as evidences of "correctness." \$4,000.

Fitzgerald (Edward). Autograph manuscript of a verse of four lines, written on 1 p., 4to, inlaid, a verse selected for the metre of his translation of "The Rubaiyat." Beneath this is written: "I came across this verse when I was looking round for a suit-

(Continued on next page)

able metre for the translation but omitted to note the author's name," etc. \$750.

Franklin. Cicero's "Cato Major," 8vo, levant morocco by Bedford, Philadelphia, 1744. Fine large copy of the finest example of Franklin's presswork. \$500.

Garrick (David). Autograph manuscript, 2 pp., folio, undated and unsigned. Giving full description how Goldsmith came to write "Retaliation." \$1,900.

Goldsmith (Oliver). "The Vicar of Wakefield," 2 vols., 12 mo., mottled calf by Riviere, Salisbury, 1766. First issue of the first edition. \$650.

Goldsmith, "The Vicar of Wakefield," 2 vols., 12mo, original sprinkled calf, in case, Salisbury, 1766. First issue of the first edition. \$1,600.

Herbert (George). "The Temple," small 8vo, levant morocco by Bedford, Cambridge, 1633. First issue of the first edition. \$1,025.

Homer. "Opera omnia," 2 vols. in one, folio, morocco by Clarke and Bedford, Florence, 1488. Rare *editio princeps*. With the Lord Vernon bookplate. \$4,200.

Johnson (Samuel). "Dictionary of the English Language," 2 vols., royal folio, contemporary calf, London, 1755. First issue of the first edition. \$320.

Keats (John). "Endymion," 8vo, original boards, in case, London, 1818. First edition in its original state. \$1,010.

Kelmscott Press. Geoffrey Chaucer's "Works," folio, white pigskin embossed and lettered, gilt edges on the rough, brass clasps, by the Doves Bindery, Hammsmith, 1896. \$1,350.

Kempis (Thomas à). "Of the Imitation of Christ," small 12mo, original vellum, London, 1589. From the library of Queen Elizabeth, with her arms stamped on the side. \$950.

Lamb (Charles). "Tales from Shakespeare," containing "King Lear and the Merchant of Venice," with 6 colored plates, 18 mo, wrappers, London, n.d. Only perfect copy known. \$675.

Lamb, A. L. S. 1 p. 4to postmarked December 22, 1834. Lamb's last known letter written five days before his death. \$675.

Lamb. Walton's "Compleat Angler," 12mo, levant morocco, London, 1772. The eighth edition. A delightful association copy, being a presentation copy from Charles Lamb to Charles May with inscription. \$825.

Lovelace (Richard). "Lucasta," 2 vols., small 8vo, London, 1649-59. First editions. \$1,400.

Milton (John). "Poems," small 8vo,

The New Books

(Continued from page 620)

Travel

TWO VAGABONDS IN A FRENCH VILLAGE. By JAN AND CORA GORDON. McBride. 1925. \$5.

Although most travellers are not vagabonds, they all like to read about them. "Vagabond," "vagabonding"—there seems to be a magic in the word which, when slipped into the title of a book, attracts an army of readers. Jan and Cora Gordon, having vagabonded through Spain and Jugoslavia, have now put the fruits of a similar experience in France into a third book. "Two Vagabonds in a French Village" records their adventures at Janac, a little, lost town tucked away in a forgotten corner of upper Languedoc, adventures of a quiet, sedentary sort because they came here to rest instead of to travel. Both being artists, they were attracted to the splendid variety of the scene, and the weeks lengthened out into four full months before they left.

There is considerable literary charm to these pages and the illustrations, which are likewise the work of the authors, are alone worth the price of the volume, yet the book has a further value. It shows the prospective traveller that the end of all travel is not movement and that one does not have to cover the length and breadth of France to get some idea of the country and the people. "Two Vagabonds in a French Village" teaches a much-needed lesson in this respect. It places penetrating powers of observation above a facility to understand French timetables, and a contented, sympathetic, catholic spirit above a restless desire to see the world through a port-hole. Surely these two vagabonds—and you can

be a vagabond in one spot as well as many if you but have the combination—never spent four more richly rewarded months than those with the good folk of Janac who prize a fertile acre in Southern France more than a principality in Utopia, or anywhere else.



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ANOTHER McCUTCHEON SALE

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON, the novelist, will sell his collection of first editions of Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray at the American Art Galleries in April. The McCutcheon collection of modern English authors has been recognized as one of the first importance, containing many rare and superb original editions. Last year, when he began his dispersal with the sale of the Stevenson, Kipling, and Hardy collections, the author pointed out that he intended to confine his interest to fewer authors. When the Dickens and Thackeray first editions are placed on exhibition they are bound to awaken great enthusiasm among collectors. Here is one of the finest sets of the original "Pickwick Papers," in existence. Another Dickens rarity is "The Strange Gentleman," of 1837. In the original parts, and almost unobtainable in this state, is Dickens's "Library of Fiction," with his autograph presentation inscription. The Thackeray material includes the rare "King Glumpus," with colored plates; "Flore et Zephyr," with nine plates by Thackeray; a copy of the first and only edition of "The Surprising Adventures of Three Men," published probably in 1848. Inserted in this copy is an autograph letter of Anne Thackeray Ritchie, in which she identifies several of the drawings as her father's, and the poem which they illustrate, "The Three Sailors," as being his work. It is said that only two copies of this anonymous work are known to exist.

GWINNETT AUTOGRAPHS

THOMAS F. MADIGAN, in the current number of his *Autograph Bulletin* discourses on the recent sale of Signers auto-

graphs in the Manning sale, giving special attention to the Gwinnett signature which brought the record price of \$22,500. He says:

"When the allusive signature of Button Gwinnett, Georgia Signer of the Declaration of Independence, was sold for \$14,000, at the famous Thomas sale in November, 1924, there were those who declared that the limit for this autograph had been reached, that this record price would stand for many years. But now, a little more than a year later, the record has been completely smashed for another Gwinnett autograph has reached the astonishing price of \$22,500. A well known collector informed me a few weeks ago that he wished me to buy the Gwinnett autograph in the Manning sale for him and inquired what bid I would suggest, and I told him I doubted if it would bring over \$15,000, but that \$20,000 would surely get it. But it developed that my bid of \$22,000 obtained for me only the distinction of being the underbidder.

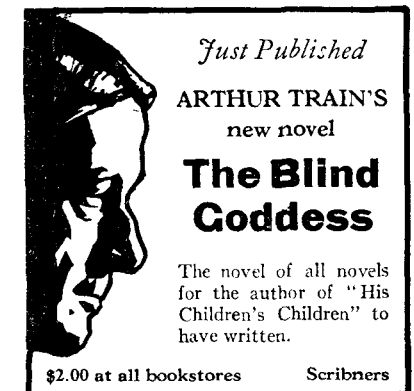
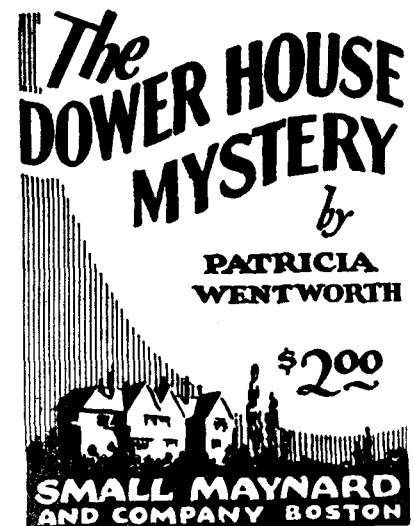
"I wonder will this latest 'record price' discourage new collectors of the Signers. I doubt it. The record price of \$14,000, for a Gwinnett certainly did not have that effect. From my observation more new sets of Signers have been begun since the Thomas sale, in November, 1924, than during the five years previous. There appears to be twenty-six complete sets of the Signers (therefore that many Gwinnetts) extant. Several of these sets are in public institutions and therefore will never be available to collectors. There are probably three or four other Gwinnetts, including the Manning, in incomplete sets. Considering this limited supply and the very apparent and growing demand I do not think it at all unlikely that the sale of a Gwinnett autograph at \$50,000 will soon be recorded. In fact, I predict this price will be reached in less than five years."

NOTE AND COMMENT

THE list of demands, during the four weeks ending December 26, for the first editions of modern British authors, compiled from the desiderata of second-hand booksellers in England, and published in the January issue of *The Bookman's Journal*, lists sixty authors, the following fifteen of which lead in the order given: Anthony Trollope, John Galsworthy, George Gissing, Sir J. M. Barrie, Charles Dickens, Norman Douglas, Rudyard Kipling, W. H. Hudson, Joseph Conrad, Sir H. Rider Haggard, George Moore, Sir A. Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy, A. A. Milne, and Walter de la Mare.

In an unpublished letter written by George Washington to Col. Humphreys on October 10th, 1787, which is in the collection owned by Adolph Lewisohn, he has this to say about the Constitution:

"The Constitution that is submitted, is not free from imperfections; but there are as few radical defects in it as could be expected, considering the heterogeneous mass of which the Convention was composed and the diversity of interests which were to be reconciled. A Constitutional door being opened, for future alterations and amendments, I think it would be wise in the People to adopt what is offered them and I wish it may be as great a majority of them as in the body that decided on it; because the importance, and sinister views of too many characters will be affected by the change. Much will depend upon literary abilities, and the recommendation of it by good pens, should it be openly, I mean publicly, attacked in the *Gazettes*. Go matters, however, as they may, I shall have the consolation to reflect, that no object but the public good, and that peace and harmony which I wished to see prevail in the Convention, ever obtruded even for a moment, in my mind, during the whole session, lengthy as it was."



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THE SAGA OF BILLY THE KID

By Walter Noble Burns

Doubleday, Page & Co. \$2.50

The Phoenix Nest

SPIRIT of Modern Fiction, we pursue thee through many corded packets of books in various jackets. * * * Spirit of Modern Fiction, we endure thee (like, oh so many mystics) with various characteristics you haven't got at all. * * * S of M. F., we have to stand or fall by scrappy reading and impulsive writing. * * * S of M. F., forgive us for inditing the following. Try, if you can, to pardon it, old thing! * * * Quite late this Spring, a brand new book by Stephen Leacock will don a jacket colored like the peacock (and done by Johnny Held). This will be "Winnowed Wisdom" most Arcadian, culled by the humorous Canadian, wherein the cat of Truth is neatly belled by all the mice of Wit. * * * We're strong for it,—although, perhaps, some flies be in the ointment,—for sometimes Leacock proves a disappointment. * * * Then here is Katharine Brush's "Glitter," another college novel of the annual litter. * * * And Reggie Kauffman now discovers—"Free Lovers," and writes about them with a pulsing pen. * * * And here again is "The Happy Ghost," H. H. Bashford's twenty stories, rare and engaging, better than a host in the magazines. * * * Scott Fitzgerald's "All the Sad Young Men" bowls a ten-strike now and then,—girls from The Brierley, boys from Mory's, men of means. * * * But the book's most distinguished contribution is the Andersonian "Absolution." * * * And a volume at which we'd advise your nibbling is the new "Teefallow," by T. S. Stripling. The title is strange and sticks in the mouth, but they call it an "amazing story of the South." * * * And down where the air is torridah, namely, viz, to wit, in Florida Stephen Benét has laid the scene of a new romance. * * * The jacket is very gay on it, the title is "Spanish Bayonet." It has all the swing and verve of a Spanish dance. * * * And legal Arthur Train has packed his new novel full of criminal practice. There's a stirring murder, a sensational trial, a hero named Hugh. * * * "The Blind Goddess" is a regular thriller, makes your head uneasy on your piller, makes you wonder at the law and doubt the killer,—if you ever knew! * * * Archibald MacLeish is strange. By Gad, he has written a play called "Nobodaddy." The title simply serves to lead in Adam and Eve as they lived in Eden. You could hardly call the play historical,—but it's not to be taken as metaphorical. * * * The price is a rather amazing caper,—it's at least six dollars, on hand-made paper! * * * "Beau Geste" a lot of money is minting. It's now in the movies and the twenty-first printing. * * * A prefatory gesture by Edward Lucas White precedes "Black Ivory" by Polan Banks. Bright is this novel's vesture. The author seems to write with fervor that should surely win our thanks. * * *

Scented moonlight, faint guitars, gleaming swords, beneath the stars, Jean Lafitte the dashing pirate, New Orleans in the rich old Creole days. * * * We shall now take to prose, however. Enough of our one-legged dancing is enough! * * * Edward W. Bok, in "Dollars Only," denounces the pursuit of the dollar with the emphasis on the only. Of course he believes that commercial endeavor is of great importance. * * * Eden Phillips is our choice for the title of Most Indefatigable Novelist. His "George Westover" now appears. It is the portrait of a fine old robust English conservative, treated sympathetically. * * * Raymond Savage, who was a captain on Lord Allenby's personal staff, has made a record of the Career and Campaigns of the famous Field-Marshal in "Allenby of Armageddon" (Bobbs-Merrill). David Lloyd George writes a preface to the book. * * * Allenby, you will remember, put the quietus on the Turk and conquered Jerusalem. * * * A rare book long out of print is Barrett Wendell's "Cotton Mather," now just reissued from the original plates by the Harvard University Press. * * * The same press brings out George Parker Winship's outline of the early history of printing, "Gutenberg to Plantin." * * * J. W. Mackail's "Classical Studies" comes from Macmillan. * * * The New Masses needs \$8,500 to start publication. Do your bit! * * * The address is 39 West 8th Street, the phone Stuyvesant 2104. * * * A new Dunsany, consisting of four plays, "Alexander," "The Old King's Tale," "The Evil Kettle" and "The Amusements of Khan Kharada" is published by Putnam. We are an old admirer of Dunsany fantasy. * * * Fifteen short stories of the kind called intellectual cocktails are included in "The Whole Story" by Princess Bibesco (same firm). * * * Louis Grudin is completing "A Primer for Aesthetes," a research into contemporary aesthetics. * * * A new belletrist is announced by the Viking Press, one John Garber Palache, who has written "Four Novelists of the Old Regime," treating the lives and works of Diderot, Crebillon, Laclous, and Restif de la Bretonne. * * * "The Saga of Billy the Kid," a true history of William Bonney, the American cowboy outlaw, by Walter Noble Burns, is a narrative that has greatly appealed to us. It comes hell-for-leather from Doubleday, Page. * * * "A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions," edited by Hyder E. Rollins at the Harvard University Press, a perfectly beautiful revivification of a book of poetry first published in 1578, with facsimile title-page and lovely typography, is a book all belletrists will hanker after. * * * And, well, that's about all in the old brief-case for today. * * * Auf wiedersehen!

THE PHOENICIAN.

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