

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Fear

WE live in crowds and crowds are cowardly. Perhaps this is why the American, who used to be independent to the point of absurdity and disputatious beyond comparison, is becoming a moral coward. Marc Connelly in "The Wisdom Tooth" has chosen a propitious moment in which to dramatize the rubber backbone, for it was never so evident.

Critics write in choruses of praise over much-touted books, which, in private, they damn by qualification, readers enjoy the frank realism of the modern novel and then agree with the first prig who calls it immoral, and publishers, who will get away with murder so long as there is no hue and cry, run for cover if a cloud as big as a man's hand appears on the horizon. The revamping and recalling of good history text-books since factions in the schools decided that they did not want truth unless it agreed with their prejudices, has been scandalous, and the rush to delete such obnoxious terms as "evolution," "survival," and "ape-like man" from other text-books, which become meaningless without them, is another instance of the herd cowardice of the human animal.

Constantinople, then a great and civilized city, rejoiced when the doctor who said that the plague was fostered by congestion and not by the will of God, demonstrated the falsity of his pagan reasoning by dying himself, but the Greeks of Constantinople had at least the merit of being afraid of God, whereas the publishers and authors who truckle to what they know to be ignorance or prejudice are concerned with nothing more dignified than possible profits. Profits, you say, and rightly, are their proper concern, since they are in the business not to give truth to the world or combat grievous error, but to make books and sell them. Argued even on these grounds, fear is an expensive emotion. If all backbones turn to rubber, soon every fact that displeases sect, race, section, or organization will be under suspicion, and making a text-book will be one long series of cuts and compromises in a book that will be worthless when done. The man that tries to please everybody always gets whipped in the end.

Peace-loving Americans think that the present controversy is a tempest in a teapot. But it is hard to keep a tempest in bounds. It is biology and history today; tomorrow it will be literature and art; and then, as in Italy, politics. Give intolerance and obscurantism a clear quarter century, and not even a writer on aesthetics will be sure of escaping jail.

A text-book in that most innocuous of subjects, English Composition, was published recently. Half-way through the press, it was discovered that it contained a letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe. The presses were stopped, and although the letter was not upon slavery, it was removed lest Southern teachers should be offended by the name of the protagonist of a dead issue. The book was published. Alas, it was found that a chapter on language stated that the sounds uttered by primitive man were sometimes little more expressive than the purr of the cat or the squeak of the monkey. Primitive man, with such primitive expression, is alive in caves and huts today, as no one denies; nevertheless, Fear suggested that Faction might interpret the reference as an argument for evolution. Why mention a monkey if not to intimate that the banderlogs were ancestors of man!

No possible issue was raised, of course, unless with those naïve folk, who, like some of the mediævals, argue that Adam spoke Hebrew. But Fear said, if

Gold

By LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

RUB the sleep out of your eyes,
Judith. Run out to the cold;
Cowslips there unpack their gold;
In the wet new grass it lies

Slender, mutable, and gay,
In a flurry of the rain;
Run before it is in vain;
Gold grows scarcer every day.

Doubtless there is still enough
To last on from year to year
Wildly permanent and clear;
Cowslips are not of that stuff.

Rosalind had this gathering, too!
Run into the house and fill
Shelf and corner of the sill;
It will last as long as you.

Rosalind went. And cowslips must.
Girls and cowslips cannot stay
Longer than the required day;
For the end of gold is dust.

This Week



"Abraham Lincoln." Reviewed by
John Drinkwater.

"The Jesuit Relations." Reviewed
by *Isabel Skelton.*

"Influencing Human Behavior." Reviewed by *George M. Dorsey.*

"The Melting Pot Mistake." Reviewed by *George M. Stephenson.*

"Voltaire." Reviewed by *C. B. Chase.*

"The Modernist and His Creed." Reviewed by *C. A. Dinsmore.*

"Cloud Cuckoo Land." Reviewed by *Anne C. E. Allinson.*

Next Week, or Later

The Art of the Printer. By *Fred-eric W. Goudy.*

the mention of languages raises a question as to its origin, better teach composition without reference to the nature of language. Fortunately, paragraph and sentence structure among the apes has never been made a subject of argument, and so the rest of the book was let alone.

Where is this going to stop? At the point where courage refuses to side-step issues which can be made controversial only by being misunderstood. The consistent anti-scientist is quite right in refusing the authority of science in matters of faith. He is obviously wrong in refusing the testimony of science where facts will tell the story, unless he is willing to throw over all science, and discard his radio, his electricity, his anti-toxin, and his automobile. If we are going to be cowards in our books, we shall be used as cowards deserve, and our trimming in the long run will cost us heavily in cold cash as well as in the advance of civilization.

The Belligerent Don*

By J. DELANCEY FERGUSON

Could man be drunk forever
With liquor, love, or fights,
Lief should I rouse at morning
And lief lie down of nights. . . .

A. E. HOUSMAN, *Last Poems*, X.

ONE week-end in November, 1911, that true knight-errant and perfect host, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, entertained at Newbuildings Wilfrid Meynell and "a typical Cambridge don, prim in his manner, silent and rather shy, conventional in dress and manner, learned, accurate, and well-informed," whose name was Alfred Edward Housman. Blunt took his guest for a walk and as he states in his "My Diaries," "asked him how he had come to write his early verses, and whether there was any episode in his life which suggested their gruesome character, but he assured me it was not so. He talks," Blunt continues, "fairly well, but not brilliantly or with any originality, depressed in tone, and difficult to rouse to any strong expression of opinion." Housman absolutely refused to read from his poems, but they "had much pleasant talk all day, and sat up . . . till twelve at night telling ghost stories. He takes an interest in these. Housman's personal appearance is one of depression and indifferent health. He does not smoke, drinks little, and would, I think, be quite silent if he were allowed to be."

The portrait is vivid, though not exhilarating; taken by itself it might stand as an awful example of the effects upon a poet of a life-time spent as Professor of Latin. Unfortunately it is quite misleading. Blunt was the soul of truth, and certainly in this case had no intention of deceiving, but the fact is that for once that incomparable host had fallen down on his job. Because he failed to light upon a topic which would rouse his guest to a strong expression of opinion he has set down what is probably the most inaccurate characterization of an English poet since Walter Savage Landor described himself as striving with none for none was worth his strife. If instead of asking the poet to read from his own poems, Blunt had suggested that the punctuation of certain stanzas ought to be amended; if he had remarked that Robinson Ellis is, of course, the greatest classical scholar of modern times; if he had hinted that textual criticism is a waste of time and effort, he would speedily have discovered that strong opinions, expressed in a vocabulary enriched by terms of abuse from four languages besides his own, might easily be elicited from the Shropshire Lad. On any topic concerned with classical scholarship, the poet would have shed opinions like the rain from heaven, and with as little respect of persons.

Admirers of Housman's poetry who have taken the trouble to look up its author in "Who's Who" have there learned that the poet, after ten years in the Civil Service, became Professor of Latin in University College, London, in 1892, where he remained until his return in 1911 to his alma mater, Cambridge, as Professor of Latin and Fellow of Trinity. They have also learned, from the same source, that he has edited Juvenal and Manilius, and has contributed many articles to such high-brow periodicals as *The Classical Review* and *The Journal of Philology*. With that information they have

*A. E. Housman was born on March 26, 1859. His "Shropshire Lad" was published just thirty years ago this month.

rested content, manfully resisting any temptation to look up these scholarly writings. And yet if one wishes to know what manner of man this poet really is, his prose is the place to learn.

The first thing one realizes on reading this prose—or as much of it as is intelligible to a reader who has forgotten most of his meager Latin, and all of his Greek—is that Housman is a scholar and not a belletristic trifler. To him, the study of a classical author is not a matter of rhapsodizing over beauties of style and diction; it is a painstaking investigation of all the existing manuscripts, comparing their variant readings, weighing all suggested emendations of corrupt passages, and tracing and explaining all obscure allusions. Such studies bring the scholar into direct contact with many ill-considered opinions of many critics, and when the scholar possesses a temperament like Housman's the result of the contact is friction, for Housman, far from suffering fools gladly, is not even tolerant of wise men when their views differ from his own. In fact, the dominant traits revealed in his scholarly writings are accuracy and arrogance.

Arrogance, after all, is no more than one ought to expect in the prose of a poet who states that he judges and much condemns the deeds of God and man. Housman himself is fully aware of the trait, for in one of his articles in the *Classical Review* he refers, with an obvious chuckle, to "that arrogant temper to which I owe my deplorable reputation," adding, in the same article, "I think before I write and blot before I print." Professors of Latin relate with bated breath the story of his inaugural address at Cambridge in 1911, in the course of which he said, in substance, "While my predecessor was alive, I stated that he had not even touched the fringes of his subject. Now that he is dead, I see no occasion for altering the statement." In similar vein, he accuses a recent editor of Catullus of throwing overboard half the ship's cargo to save the bilge-water, and of finding room in his notes "for a long record of conjectures which dishonor the human intellect. . . . He prefers the worst conjectures of the worst critics. When I say that more than sixty proceed from Robinson Ellis and nearly thirty from his disciples, their average quality can be imagined." . . .

Again, the indiscretions of a German editor evoke a sweeping characterization of the whole tribe of scholars:

Why should a classical scholar care what he says, so long as everyone knows that his heart is in the right place? In no single line of human activity except our own—not in politics, not in religion, not in the advertisement of patent medicines—would a man venture to stand forward and utter words so evidently irreconcilable with reason, with reality, and with his own behavior. But Mr. Marx knew well that he had nothing to fear. He knew that he was addressing an audience less thoughtful, less truth-loving, and less able to take care of itself, than the audiences addressed by demagogues and dervishes and quacks. He looked round Europe and saw a ring of classical scholars sitting waiting to have their prejudices flattered and their intellects affronted, and he obliged them. . . .

Another Teuton receives this blast:

There you see the modern editor of Ovid: unacquainted with textual criticism, and content to remain so; unwilling to learn, unwilling to think. He has not heard that glosses are written in margins, and find their way into texts, and he has no desire to hear it. If he chances upon critics who have learnt their trade and practise it, the spectacle does not arouse his curiosity nor induce him to reflect; it only sets him exclaiming in blank astonishment at the existence of human beings so unlike himself. . . . Many of the conjectures which he has to repeat are the conjectures of thoughtful persons: Mr. Ewald is not thoughtful, and must expect to be puzzled by the proceedings of those who are. . . .

But it is no anti-German bias that sways Housman. His own countrymen fare equally ill at his hands, as a couple of samples will show:

Perhaps at first it seems a trifle presumptuous in Mr. Owen thus to ignore the opinions of editors like Heinrich, C. F. Hermann, and Jahn, and of critics like Bentley, Markland, Dobree, and Lachmann; but I suppose his confidence is explained by the motto on the first page of his book *Dominius Illuminatio Mea*. . . .

The number of Mr. [Robinson] Ellis's conjectures [in his edition of Catullus] is considerably over eighty. . . . The majority are such as no editor would accept unless he had himself proposed them. . . . Although it is difficult to praise a text containing not only some twenty of Mr. Ellis's conjectures but also no small number of MS readings which most scholars think corrupt. . . . still there are whole poems and pages which can be read without offense. . . .

Any reader of Housman's poetry will remember that he shares with Burns and Heine a skill in the creation of striking opening lines which renders

titles unnecessary for most of his poems. These arresting "leads" appear with equal effect in his prose. Thus, when a poetaster puts forward, with apologies, a lame translation of the "Cynthia" of Propertius, Housman seizes upon a sentence from the preface:

"Scholars will pardon an attempt, however bald, to render into English these exquisite love-poems." Why? Those who have no Latin may pardon such an attempt, if they like bad verses better than silence; but I do not know why bald renderings of exquisite love-poems should be pardoned by those who want no renderings at all. . . .

And ancient poetasters fare as ill at his hands as modern:

The authors of the "Culex" and "Ciris" and "Ætna" were mediocre poets, and worse; and the gods and men and booksellers whom they affronted by existing allotted them for transcription to worse than mediocre scribes. The "Ciris" was indited by a twaddler, and the "Culex" and "Ætna" by stutterers; but what they stuttered and twaddled was Latin, not double-Dutch; and great part of it is now double-Dutch, and Latin no more. . . .

These outbursts of the poet's are regarded by his colleagues sometimes with solemn disapproval, sometimes with the awe-struck delight of a schoolboy who sees a bold companion sass the teacher, or the neighborhood bully. Even when they disapprove, however, they are constrained to admit the depth and solidity of his erudition—and so does he. He has no false modesty about recognizing that he belongs among the great classical scholars. However, he modestly disclaims all proficiency in the popular academic sport of source-hunting:

The truth is. . . that I have no inkling of *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, and to the sister science of *Quellenforschung* I am equally a stranger: I cannot assure you, as some other writer will assure you before long, that the satires of Juvenal are all copied from the satires of Turnus. It is a sad fate to be devoid of faculties which cause so much elation to their owners; but I cheer myself by reflecting how large a number of human beings are more fortunate than I. It seems indeed as if a capacity for these two lines of fiction had been bestowed by heaven, as a sort of consolation-prize, upon those who have no capacity for anything else. . . .

But noteworthy as the arrogance of Housman's learning is, it is surpassed by his accuracy. Tell a layman that a scholar has spent twenty-five years editing a poem some forty-two hundred lines in length, and the layman will probably conclude that the scholar is one of the world's brightest examples of the labor policy of "ca' canny." But let the layman thumb the pages of Housman's edition of Manilius, brushing up his dusty Latin in order to translate a few of the editor's notes, and he will begin to realize what editing means to a scholar. In the first place, of course, he finds that every extant manuscript has been considered in the effort to arrive at an accurate text. The *apparatus criticus* records all the variant readings, as well as the conjectures of all earlier editors. Furthermore, wherever a reading is disputed, Housman's notes educe parallels from the entire range of Latin and Greek literature in support of his choice.

And all this minute accuracy of detail, this far-ranging knowledge of ancient literatures, is only part of the task which Housman has set himself, and which he has carried through. Manilius was an astrologer, and the greater part of his poem is devoted to the exposition of that bewildering pseudo-science. Properly to edit him, an editor must understand his theories, and the astronomy on which they were based. And yet, declares Housman,

it cannot fairly be asked of a grammarian that he should encumber his mind with a knowledge of that intricate fraud by which Asia revenged herself on Europe for the conquests of Alexander. To deal with an astrological author he must of course lay in a large stock of obsolete misinformation; though indeed I can hardly say *must*, when two scholars within the last ten years have undertaken to edit Manilius without so much as learning the difference between a horoscope and a chronocrator. . . .

By Housman, at least, that obsolete misinformation has been mastered to such purpose that a colleague, Professor H. W. Garrod (who may be one of the two editors mentioned in the foregoing quotation), doubts if there are more than three persons in Europe who possess so complete an equipment of astrological knowledge. Soberly weighing his words, Garrod asserts that this edition "must ultimately take rank among the great monuments of Latin learning." And as for the lay reader, groping amid a Latinity and a knowledge of science which are alike too wonderful for him, he comes away from these volumes with one fact at least solidly fixed in his mind: a realization of the depth

of erudition which underlies such apparently artless lyrics as "March" in the "Shropshire Lad" and "West and away the wheels of darkness roll" in "Last Poems."

Nor are these the only side-lights on Housman the poet to be found in the work of Housman the scholar. In reviewing a book "On the Use of Classical Metres in English," he even composes an original—and uncollected—quatrain to illustrate one of his criticisms. Moreover, the whole review displays Housman as the conscious artist, interested in the qualities of the medium wherein he works.

Each syllable in a Greek hexameter, says he, was either long or short, whereas "English quantities really die into one another like the hues of the rainbow. . . . Rhythm in English is not the portable thing it was in Greek. Our stresses are indissolubly riveted to our words, and we are accustomed to call them accents. . . . Southey's and Longfellow's hexameters are often very bad verses, and they differ from Homer's in the important particular that they are written in triple while Homer's are written in quadruple time; but still verses they are of a sort. Mr. Stone's hexameters are verses of no sort, but prose in ribands.

I suppose we could all write verse if we were allowed to have our own way with the language. For instance: I propose to make English poetry on French principles. What do I require of my readers? Not near so much as Mr. Stone. I only ask them to weaken the English accent till it is no stronger than the French, and to count accurately up to twelve. Here are four alexandrines:

*Why does not the lobster climb trees or fly?
Can he not? or does he think it would look silly?
I have made these verses as well as I am able:
You must be to blame if you find them disagreeable.*

Observe the rime riche. . . .

The long and short of the matter is this: We now regulate English verse by the strong and determinate element of stress: its management is what distinguishes verse from prose. The weak and indeterminate element of quantity we subordinate: its management is one of the many things which distinguish, not verse from prose, but good verse from bad. Mr. Stone proposes that we should put the weak to the work of the strong, and subject the strong to the predominance of the weak. Summer is come, and cricket is playing everywhere. If Mr. Stone will accost the next eleven he sees in the fields, and advise them to run after the ball on their hands, and pick it up with their feet, he will hear some very good criticism of his quantitative hexameters.

And the long and short of another matter is this. Housman is not a dry-as-dust scholar who has occasionally lapsed into an unaccountable double life as a poet; the poet who feels that high heaven and earth ail from their prime foundation, and the scholar who, knowing his equality with Bentley and with Scaliger, slaughters without mercy the work of his woolly-minded colleagues, are one and the same. The poet shows again and again in the prose, as the scholar shows in that revealing phrase in the preface to "Last Poems," "It is best that what I have written should be printed while I am here to see it through the press and control its spelling and punctuation." (Does he know, one wonders, that there is a discrepancy between the Holt and the John Lane texts of the seventh poem in "A Shropshire Lad"?) And though no trace can be detected in his contributions to the *Classical Review* of that "continuous excitement under which in the early months of 1895" he wrote the greater part of "A Shropshire Lad," yet the vivid and pungent phrasing, the avoidance of superfluous adjectives, and the firm thought-structure of his lyrics are qualities that equally mark his prose.

Furthermore, extended reading of his prose brings about in the reader's mind a shift in his estimate of Housman parallel to that experienced on rereading his poetry. The casual reader of the lyrics notices first those expressing scorn, mockery, or despair; only on close acquaintance does he begin to realize that the noble stoicism of "The Oracles" and of "As I gird on for fighting" expresses the real heart of the poet. And so it is with the prose. Behind the club-swinging rudeness of the scholar who does not hesitate to characterize—in the decent obscurity of a learned language, to be sure—an opponent as a sow there flames a fanatical zeal for accuracy, for order, for truth. In the preface to his edition of Juvenal, Housman refers to "the general untidiness of the universe," which is distasteful to critics "whose love of neatness is greater than their Creator's." Housman does not find it distasteful, but he intends that in this untidy universe there shall be at least a corner of textual criti-

(Continued on page 663)

An American Epic

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: The Prairie Years. By CARL SANDBURG. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1926. 2 vols. \$10.

Reviewed by JOHN DRINKWATER
Author of "Abraham Lincoln"

MR. SANDBURG'S is a big book: big in a literal sense. And the practised reader of big books finds that he can generally measure the quality of a work after covering the first few pages, or at most a chapter or two. He may have to wait until the end before he knows whether or not he agrees with general conclusions and whether the governing design has been fitly carried out, but early in his perusal he knows, or thinks he knows, whether there is distinction or fumbling. Mr. Sandburg's "Abraham Lincoln" should warn him against any such agreeable securities. In less than twenty pages, two impressions have asserted themselves. This is obviously a book, we feel, created out of long and patient love; that is well, and the impression remains, as we shall see. But also we are from time to time, even in twenty pages, brought up short in our appreciation by such passages as this of Lincoln's mother before he was born: "And the smell of wild crab-apple blossom, and the low crying of all wild things, came keen that summer to the nostrils of Nancy Hanks." Is it possible, we ask ourselves, that the bleak poet of Chicago can really be falling to this romantic frippery? And then as we read on we find ourselves confronted by a very strange problem of style. For page by page, as such notes recur, we find that this is not romantic frippery at all, but a quite sincere, and cumulatively very touching reversion of a mind, closely disciplined in an almost savage candor, to a natural grace and leniency of sentiment. Confronted by epic character or action, we find, this least compromising of realists can stand up and prophesy with revivalist fervor. And the arresting thing, so genuine is the reality behind his voluble moods, is that he can make this rhetoric a natural modulation of his style. At first we suspect that crab-apple blossom and the crying of the wild things; but very soon we are convinced that they are conceived in an utter simplicity of faith, that they are a complement to the concrete, direct contacts that account for the more familiar aspect of Mr. Sandburg's manner, and we remain so convinced to the end. In such passages he uses what is perhaps the most dangerous of all figures in writing, and as one follows another at appointed intervals we are persuaded that he uses it with entire success.

Mr. Sandburg has been at this work for half a lifetime; it runs to nearly a thousand large and closely printed pages. A brief review can do no more than suggest something of the effect produced by a careful reading. The story covers the years from Lincoln's birth in 1809 until the time when he left Springfield for Washington in 1860. It is more than a biography of Lincoln in those years, it is a minutely elaborated study of the environment in which he grew up and matured, of the social, political, and natural forces that went to the shaping of his character, and of the far-reaching and profoundly significant implications of that character itself. It is, in fact, a comprehensive survey of the development, at once romantic and stark, of middle western America, with Illinois as the centre of the action.

Mr. Sandburg's method is a daring one. At first it may seem that his narrative has little or no consecutive design. His way is to present a scene, a social order, the shaping of political conflict of ideals, or the play of individual character, by means of a rapid succession of images and anecdotes. To read a few pages only of his book would inevitably be to feel that while these impressions separately were effective enough, they were not very strictly selected or combined to a fixed purpose. But to read on is to discover, again, that this view is wrong, and that Mr. Sandburg is using his means steadily to the accomplishment of an elaborately conceived work of art. To make a personal confession, I am a very slow reader, and having in my time absorbed some dozens of volumes about Lincoln I never expected to be beguiled by Mr. Sandburg or anyone else into reading another thousand pages on the matter. But I began to read these volumes and found thenceforth that there was no escape, and I have gone on to the end with a growing admiration for a work that slowly reveals itself not only as big in

compass but as absorbing in conception and achievement. Chapter by chapter—there are a hundred and sixty-eight of them—Mr. Sandburg convinces us of his skill in handling immense masses of detail. Pioneer life, the spread of population and the assembling of races, the progress of agriculture and industry, finance and the railroads, the ramifications of slavery and abolition, the courage, the disasters and the subtleties of personality, the loneliness and the horizons of a new nation, the drama of men and women looking westward into the wilderness and eastward to old civilization, the quarrels of politicians and the visions of statesmen, all these and countless other circumstances Mr. Sandburg marshals with the industry and the intuition of genius. And always governing this patient and absorbing argument is the figure of Lincoln, realized here as I believe it has never been realized before, the creation of a perfect blending of historical knowledge with imagination. It is not too much to say that Mr. Sandburg's book is an honor no less to the American people than to himself; it is, indeed, not unlikely that he will be found to have given the world the first great American epic.

New World Martyrs

THE JESUIT RELATIONS AND ALLIED DOCUMENTS. Selected and edited by EDNA KENTON. New York: Albert & Charles Boni. 1925. \$5.

Reviewed by ISABEL SKELTON
Author of "The Life of Thomas d'Arcy McGee"

RECORDS of the beginnings of settlement in most new lands are scant and broken. Few of those who are struggling day by day with the wilderness have the training, the leisure,



THE DANCE AFTER THE HUSKING
From "Toilers of Land and Sea." By Ralph Henry Gabriel (Yale University Press).

or the incentive necessary to write as well as to live their adventure. The outstanding exception is undoubtedly the record of the early years of the French régime in North America, preserved in the "Jesuit Relations." The Jesuit missionaries who were the pioneers of civilization in the St. Lawrence and Mississippi basins in the seventeenth century were men of wide education, acute powers of observation, and a lively interest in the land and life around them. Crowded and harried though their lives were, each year they achieved some leisure for contemplation and for record of things attempted and things done. Their centralized organization and the value of stories of converted savages and martyred priests in fanning the flames of piety in their backers in Old France, ensured minute and systematic reports. The result is an unequalled wealth of first-hand documentation.

But to most modern readers this wealth has not been easily accessible. The original "Jesuit Relations," covering the reports collected and sent home by the head of the order in New France from 1632 to 1673, were published year by year by Stephen Cramoisy in Paris. In 1858 the Canadian Government reprinted the rare Cramoisy in an edition now nearly as rare, and a little later O'Callaghan, Martin, and Carayon issued supplementary documents. Then, in 1894, the Burrows Brothers Company of Cleveland, with Reuben Gold Thwaites as editor, published a monumental edition, covering the period from 1610 to 1791, and including in its seventy-three volumes a dozen times as much material as the original Cramoisy. But this edition, limited to 750 sets, was beyond the reach of the general reader.

Miss Kenton has come to the rescue by compiling in a single volume, in English, the essential documents of this vast hoard. Her work is a masterpiece of condensation. Miss Kenton has proved her-

self to be more than the competent craftsman who saw a work which needed to be done and bent to it patient powers of execution until it was finished. Her book reveals a clear, logical, recreating grasp of the field covered. It is arranged in five self-contained but closely related parts, and each part again in chapters, each of which deals in straight and uninterrupted narrative with an episode or a character. It is surprising in many cases how the lifting of the content of these chapters out of its ephemeral setting allows a noteworthy contribution to history to stand forth in clear and uncluttered distinctness. A sure historical judgment went to the deciding what to keep and what to discard. Where Relations overlapped it was perhaps easy to choose the more complete or condensed, or the more graphic or picturesque, as the need might be. Again, where the report had merely a specialized, ecclesiastical interest, there was little question about omission in such a volume. The yearly accounts of religious services and ceremonies, which even the chronicler found wearisomely like those of the year before, the pious utterances of converted savages, and the long baptismal lists, which would impede the story for the lay reader of today, have been judiciously omitted.

Again, the extracts have been skilfully arranged so that one gains a coherent conception of each particular feature. As far as possible Miss Kenton gives complete blocks of narrative from the originals, and in this way retains the warm native vividness of writers speaking for themselves. No secondary source, not even Parkman's inimitable story of "The Jesuits in North America," can recreate exactly the same breathing picture. It might have been helpful had she indicated the omissions from the text by the usual asterisks, but they would no doubt have detracted from the satisfying completeness one feels in reading the unbroken lines. She did well to include in full the Marquette manuscripts and Coquart's "Memoir upon the Posts of the King's Domain." These are two of the most valuable documents in the Thwaites edition. Another unique part, the "Journal des Jésuits," the running story of their daily life at Quebec during many years, has been lifted out of each little yearly division, and in the twelfth section of Part IV suggestive passages have been quoted from it and make up an intimate picture capable of arousing any one's imagination. Thus a volume of extracts becomes in reality a unified story, an artistic whole, thanks to the sympathetic care which went to the arranging.

In the Tradition

SONATA AND OTHER POEMS. By JOHN ERSKINE. New York: Duffield & Company. 1925. \$1.25.

THE AWAKENING AND OTHER POEMS. By DON MARQUIS. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1925. \$2.

COLLECTED POEMS. By MAURICE BARING. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1925. \$2.
Reviewed by LOUIS UNTERMEYER

NOTHING that the iconoclasts can say against the traditional attitude is worse than the effect it seems to have on most of its worshippers. Mathematical evidence may be found on every publisher's list, that there is no common denominator like tradition. A rather pointed instance of its levelling influence is furnished by this trio of volumes representing the serious poetry of a daily "columnist," a professor of literature at Columbia, and an English essayist. The three authors are distinct personalities; they have their own differentiated points of view; their backgrounds, preferences, and private tastes are manifestly dissimilar. Yet their public attitude—at least as far as it is revealed in their poetry—is one of dispiriting similarity; whatever is original in conception is somehow reduced to an irreproachable but merely satisfactory execution. One waits hopefully for the fiery moment, but the low flames are well-controlled in proper hearths. One looks for the fitful light in which a poet is revealed, a sudden turn or accent, a flash of strangeness, a personal irradiation—but nothing flickers, nothing burns. We are in the presence of a mild glow, a suave series of reflected reflections.

Mr. Erskine's intentions are the most interesting of the three. He is at his best when, untroubled by the necessity of being "modern," he can rely on his inherently academic instincts. The title-poem is the book's most successful note: a piece of philo-