

A Prize Novel

MRS. MERIVALE. By PAUL KIMBALL. New York: Edward J. Clode, Inc. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

"MRS. MERIVALE" was selected, out of 6,700 manuscripts submitted, by Harry Hansen and Grant Overton for the Clode prize of \$2,500. It is a first novel by Paul Kimball, who is reported to be a Bostonian of some thirty-four years of age. The book is less a novel than a character sketch, and as such will provide diverting entertainment to the sagacious reader who enjoys a bit of irony at the expense of his fellow-men—and himself. Mrs. Merivale is a natural-born go-getter. She is beautiful, she is magnetic, and she is the world's champion bromide. Having been left a wealthy widow, and being utterly bored with maintaining her great sorrow, she flees her beautiful suburb and seeks out New York where no further mourning will be required of her, and where she can exploit her personality unhampered. Her pseudo-musical career, her subtle wooing of the gentle Dr. Platter—one knew he was doomed, the moment he appeared at dinner,—her achievement of social success, her final *débouche* into the literary limelight, give Mr. Kimball ample opportunity for pointing out, not only the appallingly successful superficiality of his heroine, but also the multifarious subterfuges making merry in the realms of art and letters today.

The author breaks into broad farce at will, but this is so nonsensically delightful, and so within the range of Mrs. Merivale's improbability that no one is any the worse off. The book is mildly well-written without any distinction of style, which is very likely merely Mr. Kimball's, concession to his subject. The baiting of Babbitry is no new thing in these post-Lewis days, but as long as the result is as amusing as in this prize novel, it is acceptable. Mr. Kimball's next book will probably be much more than that.

A Prairie Prophet

THE CHARIOT OF FIRE. By BERNARD DE VOTO. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. DE VOTO has written of the frontier fanatic who thought himself a new Messiah. He has taken the same theme which William Dean Howells treated in "The Leatherstocking" and made of it a novel which, if less mellow, wise, and penetrating in its portraiture than Howells's, is more dramatic and spirited. The subject is difficult. It requires a thorough knowledge of backwoods society, a firm grasp of frontier psychology, to make the mere basis of the story convincing. Mr. De Voto has to explain how the Illinois prairie of the twenties or thirties could bring forth a mystic with visions of God and revelations from him, and how he could recruit followers by the score. He has to exhibit the inevitable clash of the new religionists with the equally fanatical Christians of the Peter Cartwright school, and within this clash he must find the personal elements of his narrative. It is a very different task from that involved in the ordinary objective historical novel.

The central achievement of Mr. De Voto is his study of Ohio Boggs, the village drunkard who gets religion at a great orgiastic camp meeting, and begins preaching the imminent Day of Judgment, with his own power to save the chosen few. Boggs, who gathers scores of disciples about him, is a greater villain than Howells's Messiah, Dylks. But he is treated rather more charitably. He is a sot, an adulterer, and a murderer. He slays his wife when she interferes with his purposes, and uses his position to prey upon the women he wants. His most effective revelations are cunning counsels of crime. By virtue of these counsels his holy city of Lo-Ruhamah ultimately becomes a den of robbers, supporting themselves by raids upon the nearest hamlets and farms. Sometimes these raids are bloody, and Boggs rejoices in the death of the Philistines. But the great merit of Mr. De Voto's character study is the skill with which he shows that Boggs was no conscious impostor. He was self-deluded before he deluded others; his illiterate, drink-dimmed, religion-fuddled brain is convinced of his righteousness. Obscene and ugly as he is, he is compre-

hensible, not intolerably repulsive, and at times even pitiable.

The story moves at a rapid pace, and follows a logical pattern. Seceding from the rest of their frontier community, the Boggsites soon find themselves in direct hostility to it. Even families are rent asunder. A smouldering feud springs up between the extremists on both sides, and a brutal raid of the Boggsites, with four farmers slain, converts the feud into open war. Among Ohio Boggs's followers is a lovely but foolish girl, whom Boggs himself comes to fancy—a girl whom he has rescued from death by one of his "miracles;" on the other side is the girl's lover, a promising youth. These characters might be called conventional, but the girl is treated with real understanding—her waverings between the prophet and her suitor, between common sense and religious hysteria, are made genuinely real. Still another character is conventional; the free-thinking judge who acts as a tragic chorus for the drama, offering his sardonic comments upon its various phases. But he also takes on individuality when he becomes captain of the Christians who march against the Boggsites. With the battle between the two forces the story reaches a well-planned climax. The girl, the lover, the judge, and Ohio Boggs all play important parts in a rather unexpected dénouement.

Mr. De Voto has written an able study of religious frenzy and of the temperament of the religious fanatic and organizer; he has combined it with a good, if not highly distinguished, picture of frontier life and a well-knit love story. The result is a novel of varied interest and a real addition to the fiction of pioneer society.

Bridge "Cases"

LENZ ON BRIDGE. By SIDNEY S. LENZ. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GLENN F. MITCHELL

IN this latest contribution to the bibliography of Bridge, Mr. Lenz has broken away from precedent and presented an intricate subject in an entirely novel and entertaining manner. It reads more in the style of a work of fiction than a technical study, as will be readily seen from a glance at the chapter headings which are of a character to inspire immediate interest. These include such titles as "Making the Cards Obey," "When a Lost Trick Returns Two-Fold," "Oh, the Deuce," and "Never, Never, Never."

It has long been recognized that a sounder knowledge of many subjects can be acquired by means of a thorough analysis and understanding of actual cases than by the usual method of memorizing principles. This is particularly true of the study of law. Mr. Lenz endeavors to apply the "case" system to Bridge by dispensing with hard and fast rules, injunctions, and minute details, and allowing the principles to reveal themselves in the proper bidding and play of a multiplicity of selected deals.

The book is certain to be of much value to those with some Bridge experience. It is apparently not designed for the absolute beginner. Most of the situations analyzed, including that presented in the very first illustrated deal, are somewhat too complex to be comprehended by the uninitiated, and the usual elementary problems that beset the beginner are for the most part passed over entirely. On the other hand, by repeated study of the bidding and play of each hand, he would at least avoid the all too common fault of developing into a mechanical player.

Mr. Lenz considers the play of a hand fully as important as the bidding, and while the steps leading up to the final bid are always stated, the comment and analysis of the play are much more extensive. His point that expert play permits greater freedom in bidding in the later rounds is well taken. Obviously the ability to get the most out of a hand inspires a far greater measure of confidence in the auction.

It is refreshing to find a writer on Bridge who does not burden the student with the usual mass of set formulæ such as systems of "counting up" a hand. Mr. Lenz is content to state what constitutes a trick and a half-trick and the requirements of an initial bid and raises in these terms. In fact, the keynote of the entire book is insistence upon the elasticity of rules and the handling of each situation encountered on its own merits.

A completely indexed copy of the 1926 Laws of Bridge is appended at the close.



Poems by Tu Fu

(A.D. 713-780)

Translated by FLORENCE AYS COUGH

Collaborator with Amy Lowell in "Fir Flower Tablets"

GOING OUT FROM THE FRONTIER

THE misery of separation! the misery of separation!

I go out from my old home.
To the far distance! to the far distance! I pace
toward the Chiao River.
I must keep an appointment set by the Imperial
House;
To evade the command would envelop me in a net
of disaster.
The Princely One has already sufficient districts and
territory,
Why should innumerable frontiers be opened?
Renounced, cut short, love of father and mother!
Stifling the sound of sobs; my lance across my back;
I go.

II

THE day I went out from the door is long
past,
No more do I endure insult and ridicule
from the foot soldiers.
Love of my father and mother, my bones and my
flesh, is already severed;
Their son will die at no appointed time.
My fleet horse tosses the bridle from his head;
My hand grasps green raw-silk reins.
Nimble I clamber down ten thousand ridges,
Bending my body I strive to seize a flag.

III

GRIND my knife at Wu Yen Waters
The water is red, the blade wounds my hand.
I desire that this cutting bowels sound shall
cease—
My heart and mind have long been sunk in this
disorder.
Fine men have taken oaths, are promised to their
country;
What avails the recurring urge of grief and resent-
ment?
Portraits of those who have attained fame, hang in
the Ch'i Lin Pavilion;
Bones on the battlefield rot quickly, and decay.

IV

SINCE there were older people who took leave
of the foot-soldier,
It follows that responsibility for his body lies
with the far-off frontier guard.
Life? Death? they are before me.
Nor must I rouse the anger of the recruiting officer.
On the road I meet a man. We recognize each other.
I entrust to him a letter for my relations of the six
degrees;
Ai-tsai, Alas, alas, we are cut off and severed;
Never again shall we meet the bitterness and struggle
of life together.

V

FAR off, Far off, ten thousand *li* and more
They lead me. We pace towards the Three
armies,
In the ranks abuse and good treatment differ greatly;
How can the Commander-in-Chief know everything
by report,
At the dividing river we see the Hu mounted on
horses.
Suddenly there are several hundred groups.
At first I was serving man;
When shall I set up a reputation for service rendered
to the State?

VI

WHEN bows are bent, they should be bent
strongly;
When arrows are used, they should be
long.

The bow-men should first shoot the horses.
In taking an enemy prisoner, the Leader should
first be taken.
There should be no limit to the killing of men
In making a kingdom there must naturally be a
boundary.
If it were possible to regulate usurpation,
Would so many be killed and wounded?

(English rendering by Amy Lowell in

VII

WE urge our horses, Heaven rains down
snow—

The army moves and enters high hills;
The paths are precipitous; we cling to cold rocks, and
Our fingers break through layers of frost and ice.
We have already gone far from the Moon of Han;
When shall we return, to pound down the founda-
tions of city walls?
At sunset floating clouds pass to the South;
We can gaze upon them. We cannot grasp them
with our hands.

VIII

THE Kahn seizes upon our ramparts
A hundred *li* are darkened by the wind-
borne dust.

The fierce two-edged swords move in action four
and five times;
Those soldiers retire, they stampede from before us.
The famous King of the Tiger Men returns with
us;
The famous King of the Tiger Men returns with us;
Tied by the neck we deliver him at the palisade gate,
The insignificant bodies prepare serried ranks.
One victory! Why so much talk?

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 雪 | 山 | 石 | 間 | 遠 |
| 雨 | 馬 | 寒 | 冰 | 月 |
| 天 | 入 | 抱 | 骨 | 漢 |
| 馬 | 行 | 危 | 蒼 | 去 |
| 驅 | 軍 | 經 | 指 | 已 |

Facsimile of Tu Fu poem as it appears in Chinese characters.

IX

I HAVE followed the army for ten years and
more;
My ability is without a divided inch of recog-
nition!

All men accept readily honour and official rank.
I wish to speak, but blush that my words should
re-echo.
On the plains of the Central State are struggles and
contests,
With barbarians of the North and Wild Tribes of
the West,
The ambitions of men are at the Four Quarters.
How end unending woe?

In A. D. 747 during the reign of Ming Huang, or the
Bright Emperor of the T'ang dynasty, his General Ko-shu
Han was appointed Governor of the Northwestern provinces.
A period of military conquest ensued while Ko-shu Han
attempted to extend the frontiers. The poet Tu Fu, then a
man of thirty-four, was already noted for his definite ideas
and his extreme freedom of speech. In the above cycle
of poems which deals with the fighting under Ko-shu Han
he expresses his opinion in regard to wars of conquest most
clearly.

Several Chinese idioms occur which may seem strange
to Western readers. In stanza two the conscript uses the
expression, "to go out from the door" which is also used
when a daughter marries or when a son enters the priest-
hood. In each case the individual no longer counts as a
member of the Clan. The term "my bones and my flesh"
means father and mother. Bones are looked upon as a
heritage from one's father while flesh is supposed to be
supplied by the maternal line. In stanza three the Ch'i
Lin Pavilion referred to was a Hall of Fame where the
portraits of great and successful generals were hung. The
opening line of stanza four shows that the conscript was a
member of a family, not a lone individual; the "elders"
spoken of are his own relations, to whom he is responsible
for his body since that is simply the property of the Clan.
It is laid down in the Book of Rites that a body shall be
delivered at death to the World of Shade, in the same con-
dition that it is received from one's parents, which is one
reason that the Chinese object so strongly to amputation or
any mutilation of the body. The relations of the "six
degrees" are father, mother, elder and younger brothers,
elder and younger sisters, and the Chinese ideal of happiness
is that all shall till the fields and meet the struggle of life
together.

In stanza nine Tu Fu closes with the bitter reflection that
whereas study and the arts of Peace *should* bring the most
highly coveted rewards, under the present condition of strife,
the ambitions of men are best realized by military success
at the Four Quarters!

The BOWLING GREEN

The Whitman Shelf

THE Walt Whitman shelf is getting very
crowded. New editions and new com-
mentaries keep coming along, and I put
down here, mostly for my own convenience, a brief
digest of some recent memoranda on this matter.

Emory Holloway's compact little "Popular Au-
thorized Edition" of the Leaves, just issued, gives
us more than 400 pages at the easy price of \$1.25.
It is admirable—and I think unique among cheap
editions—in containing also a well chosen selection
of Whitman's prose. It is an edition intended chiefly
for younger readers—"immature students whose pov-
erty of experience handicaps them in judging sanely,"
Professor Holloway says in his preface. To that end
the poems have been carefully sifted and abridged,
the howls restrained by decorum (Walt's phrase).
Professor Holloway's omissions seem to me sensible
enough. What I question is the judiciousness of
always indicating the hiatus (by a line of dots) which
is often done in just such a way as to rouse the
curiosity of our immature student. I firmly believe
that wherever omissions are advisable it is far better
simply to go ahead and omit, without anchoring a
buoy to mark the foundered passage. That Walt
must be edited for the tender reader is a theorem
that seems to me beyond dispute. He was like
the old-fashioned Buddhist who discards nothing and
even preserves the toe-nail parings of a lifetime in
a lacquer box so that he may eventually render his
corpus complete to its Maker.

That, I suppose, is a problem of editorial policy
and may be left *sub judice*. My argument would
certainly not be that Professor Holloway has taken
out too much, but that here and there he has left in
just enough to sharpen the anxious instinct of adoles-
cence. Of course the adult student will insist on his
Leaves entire, crying "The Deil run awa' with the
excise man."

For his judicious assortment of Walt's prose Pro-
fessor Holloway deserves nothing but praise. I still
cannot convince myself that Democratic Vistas, for
instance, is familiar to one per cent of its possible
beneficiaries. This gorgeous, magnificent, and some-
times gently ludicrous discussion of the American
"literatus," the need of "powerful native philosophs
and bards" can afford to be a trifle absurd at times,
as only very great things can. It is nine tenths ethos
and one tenth bathos; sometimes one feels that the
ideal "Philosoph" whom Walt imagines is less liter-
atus than saleratus. The rich meat of Walt's theme
is joyously streaked with occasional gristle and fat.
But let not any hilarity at its naïveté blind you to
its enormous power and purport. It is full of
"precious minims," that fine phrase of Walt's that
always stuck in Thomas Mosher's mind. Not in the
most modernist journalism will you find more arrows
sharpened and aimed toward the target of To-
morrow. It is a queer thing that the most violently
contemporary of our literatuses is the one who has
been dead these thirty-four years. Take, almost at
random, a few scraps from Democratic Vistas—
would you not say they came from this month's
American Mercury?—

The main social, political, spine-character of the
States will probably run along the Ohio, Missouri and
Mississippi rivers. . . .

A nation may hold and circulate rivers and oceans of
very readable print, journals, magazines, novels, library-
books, "poetry," etc., and yet, all the while, the said
nation, strictly speaking, may possess no literature at
all. . . .

Do you call those genteel little creatures American
poets? Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot
work, American art, American drama, taste, verse? I
think I hear the scornful laugh of the Genius of these
States. . . .

To workmen portraying interior or spiritual life, the
audiences are limited, and often laggard—but they last
forever. . . .

Of what is called the drama in the United States I
should say it deserves to be treated with the same gravity
and on a par with the questions of ornamental confec-
tionery at public dinners. . . .

Present literature, while magnificently fulfilling cer-
tain popular demands, with plenteous knowledge and
verbal smartness, is profoundly sophisticated, insane, and
its very joy is morbid. . . .

Here, you see, is a rather different voice from
the robust auto-intoxicant of the leaves. The poetry

gives us Walt, but the prose gives us Whitman. He
felt pretty low in his mind about America when he
wrote Democratic Vistas. The Leaves, he remarked
once, were not so much a poem as a "radical utter-
ance out of the Emotions and the Physique." But
Emotions and Physique had little to do with the Vis-
tas, when he sat down and began gingerly to con-
template the appalling possibilities of conglomerate
democracy. He seemed to have a faint hope that
great things might be accomplished by the advance
of women (which he endlessly prophesied, though
insisting more on fecundity than the modern Min-
erva would relish.) "A strong and sweet Female
Race, a race of Perfect Mothers," was the burden of
his song. It was the lady, however, who had the
burden of the child, and would have found Walt
distressingly inconsecutive as a family head. He
complained that Perfect Mothers had not been
represented in fiction, but that was before the days
of Gene Stratton-Porter.

I wish cheerfulness wouldn't keep breaking in
when one writes about Walt. He said (somewhere
in the Vistas, I think) that the Future Literatus must
not have any sense of burlesque. Yet nothing would
be more humanly entertaining than a consensus of
the various opinions that have been uttered about him
from the time of Emerson and Thoreau to the
present. Perhaps William Sloane Kennedy has done
that in his "The Fight of a Book for the World,"
which I haven't seen. Kennedy says in his circular
"Leaves of Grass has had already a sparkling tri-
umph like that of Uncle Tom's Cabin." Against
which I find, in a review in the London *Times Liter-
ary Supplement* (Jan. 22, 1925) the astonishing
statement "Whitman is little read in America and is
totally without influence there." The same journal
said (Dec. 11, 1924) "Nothing is more certain than
that Whitman believed in personal immortality, the
survival of bodily death." I doubt whether this is
certain. Almost everything in regard to Whitman
criticism is still in a state of healthy flux. Sir Ed-
mund Gosse, who has said (like everyone else) things
both wise and preposterous about Walt, is particularly
offended by the 1855 Preface, which some of us so
greatly admire. "What is prodigious in the poetry
becomes mean and bumptious in this dreadful prose.
That was in the London *Sunday Times* of June 20,
1926; almost on the same date Stuart Sherman, in
the *Herald-Tribune*, was saying of the Preface "a
literary document which interests and stirs me more
profoundly than any similar prelude to a new age
in the annals of literature." Gosse, attribut-
ing Walt's ornery taste to the fact that he once
worked on the Brooklyn *Eagle*, says "Was all this
not responsible for the hideous crudity of phrase
which seems to be always lurking to leap out upon
Whitman's most ambitious periods?" And at the
same moment St. Loe Strachey was writing to the
New York *Times* about "Whitman's power and
inspiration in the matter of the great phrase."

The justest and most sympathetic balancing of
pros and cons in regard to Walt that I have seen
lately is John Bailey's excellently shrewd and per-
ceptive little volume in the revived English Men of
Letters series. But none of the newer Whitman
criticism need make one forget Bliss Perry's fine
study, now twenty years old, with its thrilling con-
clusion—"No American poet now seems more sure
to be read, by the fit persons, after one hundred or
five hundred years."

I apologize for these too random notes, carried
forward from my private Debit and Credit ledger.
Nothing that concerns either Walt the poet or Whit-
man the too-little read artist in prose is wholly un-
important.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Among the forthcoming books of this season is
a volume by no less than John James Audubon, the
great ornithologist. His monumental work on
"The Birds of North America" is known to every
bird-lover but few know that in this great and now
very expensive work, are incorporated some sixty
off-hand sketches which Audubon named his "De-
lineations of American Scenery and Character."
These sketches have now been gathered into one
volume to which Professor F. H. Herrick, author
of the standard biography of the great ornithologist,
has written an introduction.

The sketches mainly relate to events between
1808 and 1834 and as sidelights on pioneer life
in America, particularly of the Ohio and Mississippi
valleys, they have a perennial interest. They are to
be published by G. A. Baker & Co.