

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

VOLUME IV

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, AUGUST 13, 1927

NUMBER 3

Leisure and Culture

M R ALDOUS HUXLEY, discussing in the current issue of *Harper's Magazine* "the outlook for American culture," makes somewhere the statement that "universal leisure and variety of impressions make possible a rich universal culture." Now, that leisure is a prerequisite of culture is a truth as old as the ancient civilizations whose glorious intellectual achievements were reared upon it. Indeed there have always been found some to say that the very seed of a pregnant culture is a social hegemony in which the enslavement of the many means the unfettering of the few. Only then does civilization reach its ripest capacity when the subservience of the masses to the wants of a group releases the energy of that group from the struggle for existence to the ferment of ideas.

Leisure, of course, implies luxury, and luxury implies the indulgence of a taste for the novel, the beautiful, or the esoteric. Social groups habituated to leisure by long enjoyment of it, and living on the artistic usufruct of earlier generations that have reaped its profits, inevitably by a process of familiarization and refinement develop bases of value and standards of judgment. But the process is a long one, and the sudden possession of leisure and the means to gratify the esthetic desires that are the common possession of the connoisseur and the tyro by no means insures a coincident development of taste and interest. Our American culture is so thin a veneer at present and so constant a target for the critics precisely because it has had so short a time for maturing.



For it must not be forgotten that America is the nation of the middle class, and that to an extent never before known in history prosperity prevails among the masses. Leisure in this country is the possession not of the few but in some degree of the majority, and that majority has been built up and is constantly being recruited from the unfavored classes, from the downtrodden, the ignorant, and the economically harassed. Circumstance has held their noses to the grindstone, and when ill circumstance has suddenly been translated into good fortune, it is small wonder that the richer life opened out should produce a welter of unbalanced impressions. The very "variety of impressions" which Mr. Huxley says, together with leisure, should make possible a rich culture operates temporarily against the acquisition of that culture. Where the senses are perpetually bombarded by a thousand manifestations of a complex civilization it is infinitely more difficult to discriminate amongst them than when the range of selection is limited to a few. Only the extraordinary individual is born with a perfect sense of fitness, with the ability unerringly to assess worth, and to distinguish between the meretricious and the true. For most of us critical ability is an acquired faculty, bred of study and example and the possession of an accredited data of knowledge. And in how many an instance even the trained critical sense can be befuddled by fustian we have only to recall the innumerable intellectual fads that have swept the country to understand.

Here in America is a vast population, in a constant state of social flux, the upper fringe of which has been for several generations possessed of wealth and culture, and if not of leisure simply not of leisure because its tradition has favored work. Back of it, and constantly impinging upon this fringe, are the millions who have recently acquired or are in process of acquiring economic ease, who have had

Lines to a Ship-Model

(For sale in a Provincetown Antique Shop)
By HARRY KEMP

YOU'VE just returned from voyaging somewhere
Over a purple sea with shining prow;
You can't deceive my eyes by sitting now
Diminished to a model but hand-square:
Last night I voyaged too: I saw the air
Pushing your canvas, big; and I saw how
Your skysails glistened in the morning's brow—
For was I not your sailor, climbing there?

They think that I spent all night couched in bed,
You, in your window: that my ordered ways
Are as my pen moves; as they're sure that you
Are but a toy—but what great dawns are red
Over lone wastes, what ocean-whelmed days,
We know, and fool them from the secret too!

This Week

"New Backgrounds for a New Age."
Reviewed by *Talbot F. Hamlin*.

"A History of the Ancient World."
Reviewed by *C. W. Mendell*.

"Demoniality." Reviewed by *S. Foster Damon*.

"The Main Stream." Reviewed by *Arthur Colton*.

"In China." Reviewed by *Felix Morley*.

Qwertuio: A Shirtsleeves History.

"Witch Wood." Reviewed by *Samuel Merwin*.

Neihardt's "Works." Reviewed by *William Rose Benét*.

Next Week,

On Mrs. Trollope's "Domestic Manners of the Americans." By *Michael Sadleir*.

the advantages of education and travel and therefore the equipment to measure the values of life. Back of them come those incomparably more millions who have known the yearning for sweetness and light but never having had the chance to make contact with the fruits of culture have equally had no chance to establish standards of judgment. Yet these millions are fluid, and are constantly advancing to a higher economic status. With more wealth comes more leisure, more opportunity to indulge the desire for beauty and enjoyment. Why then feel surprise that in the tumult of impressions that increased opportunity brings the false frequently appears as the true, and the artificial as the real? Culture seeps down slowly, but American society is of porous constitution and is constantly in process of absorbing. "Leisure and variety of impressions" may not yet have produced a widespread culture in the United States but there is reason to hope that in time they will.

William Blake

By J. B. PRIESTLEY

W ILLIAM BLAKE, poet, artist, and seer, died one hundred years ago, on August 12, 1827, in Fountain Court in the Strand. His last hours were entirely characteristic of the man. He was sixty-nine years of age, and for the past eighteen months had been ailing and frequently confined to his bed. But the very day of his death found him still working, trying to finish his Dante drawings. Suddenly—his friend Tatham tells us—he threw down the design he had been coloring and cried: "Kate, you have been a good wife; I will draw your portrait." They had been together, happy and inseparable, for forty-five years, and this domestic idyll—for it was nothing less than that—had begun with the strangest courtship. When Blake was twenty-three he was jilted by "a lively little girl called Polly" and was so distraught that he was sent, for a change of scene, to Kew, to stay at the house of a market-gardener named Boucher. His host had a pretty daughter, Catherine, who listened very sympathetically to Blake's story. He was immediately touched. "Do you pity me?" he asked. "Yes, indeed I do," she told him. "Then I love you," he cried; and they were married in the following year. He taught her to read and to write, then the rudiments of his craft of engraving and coloring, so that she helped in his work. If he felt suddenly inspired during the night to set down his visions, she would rise with him and hold his hand. She was, too, "a good housewife and a good cook." The annals of literature and art, which are filled with toiling and patient women, outnumbering all the fickle beauties, can show no better wife. Now, on this last afternoon, she sat near the bed and he spent an hour making a drawing of her. When this was done, he began to sing in joy and triumph. Just before the end, an eye-witness tells us, "his countenance became fair, his eyes brightened, and he burst into singing of the things he saw in heaven." Thus he died as he had lived, in an ecstasy of vision.



"Drive your horse and cart over the bones of the dead," he had once written. At the time of his death he was still poor and almost unknown, so that he came to be buried in a common grave and in a little while his very bones were scattered. Now he began to live in the minds of men, however, for his works were increasingly studied and his fame, the wonder of him, shot up like a magic tree. In his own day, and for many a year after, he was set down as a madman. Now we are not so sure. Wordsworth, after reading some of the poems, declared that there was something in their madness that interested him more than the sanity of Byron and Scott. Looking back at Blake's life, thinking over what he did and what he was, we can only echo Wordsworth's remark. If this is madness, then what are we to say of the world's sanity? Here is a man who claims no pity of ours. He possessed no advantages, was almost self-taught, always poor, and had to work early and late, forever harassed by circumstances; but neither neglect nor misunderstanding soured him; he lived happily in his rich and fiery imagination, in the two arts he practised and in his bold sallies of thought; he rarely complained and was grateful for the least service; he was honest, brave, and independent in the world's glance, simple and warm-hearted in his relations with those about him, and there was no man or woman long in his

company who did not find him lovable. His character is there in that eager open face,* with its fine forehead and large eyes, its "expression of great sweetness." Such was William Blake, and if he is to be regarded as one of our lunatics, then it is a pity there are so many sane men in the world.

It is not surprising, however, that his contemporaries should have concluded that he was insane. The fault was partly his and partly theirs. Where he is at fault, we may discover his weakness, and where they were at fault, we may discover his strength. We will begin with his weakness, the result of special circumstances that were bound to make him appear eccentric to the pitch of madness as a person, and ended by ruining him as a poet. Now Blake was a bold and original thinker who entirely lacked formal education. No amount of such education will produce original thought in a man, but it will at least discipline his mind and will enable him to communicate his thought. Again, Blake was a mystic who stood outside a tradition. There were no symbols waiting for him, so that he was compelled to create his own. This fact did not disturb him, for he lived so intensely to himself that he was increasingly unable to make proper allowances for his hearers and readers. Add to this his central conviction, the keystone of his doctrine, that man best approaches reality through his imagination, that whatever is intensely imagined, clearly seen by the inward eye, is real and actual, and we have the clue to all his failings.

We can put it another way by saying that the mystic in him defeated the poet and weakened the artist. The failure of his poetry, after the first and glorious lyrical stage is passed, is a failure in communication. By the time he has reached the Prophetic Books, he is like a man who has decided to speak in a language of his own, and makes matters even worse by using words already known to us while giving them special meanings. These later works introduce us to a private mythology, take us to some dark and distant planet where there is nothing but a groaning and howling and a few titanic shapes in the gloom. At last they cease to be literature altogether and become theosophical puzzles. No such failure attends his art, but there is weakness even here and it comes from the same source. His belief that natural objects weaken and deaden the imagination, that the sight of "outward creation" (his own term) is a hindrance and not a help, set free the seer in him only to bind the artist, for the artist must go to work with Nature, must look out to express his own vision, and turns aside at his peril. Thus, much as we admire Blake's art, we cannot be surprised to find that his drawing is commonly crude and violent and false, that his pictures, having once flashed their idea at us, frequently have nothing more to say and leave us cool and sceptical. So much for his weakness.

Where his contemporaries were at fault, we have said, we can discover his strength. Had we grown up in the eighteenth century, he would have startled us (and it is easy to see now that he delighted in flashing out a startling paradox) into making the most sweeping judgments upon him. His boldness and originality enter here. He insisted upon reversing every decision of his time, standing the eighteenth century on its head. Thus he began by trusting the imagination completely. To him the hour of inspiration was the hour of Truth. He was the first, as he was in many respects the greatest, of our Romantics. In an age that asked for elaborate proof, he declared:

He's a blockhead who wants a proof of what he can't
Perceive;
And he's a fool who tries to make such a Blockhead believe.

The immediate intuition was enough for him, and cautious reasoning was devils' work:

He who Doubts from what he sees
Will ne'er Believe, do what you Please,
If the Sun and Moon should Doubt
They'd immediately Go Out.

In an age that delighted in generalization and discovery of rules for everybody in both life and art, he cried: "To generalize is to be an idiot. To particularize is the great distinction of merit." He even refused his consent to that general benevolence which is characteristic of his time, saying:

He who would do good to another must do it in Minute
Particulars.
General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite, and
flatterer.

*See next page for portrait of Blake.

In his "Jerusalem," he says: "I must Create a System, or be enslaved by another Man's;" and the system he created is based on the instincts and intuitions of the artist. What he did was to substitute an esthetic basis for the common moral foundation. Character and energy are all-important, and Good and Evil are largely illusory, their contrast a play of shadows. This conviction is behind his note on Aristotle:

Aristotle says, characters are either good or bad: now, goodness or badness has nothing to do with character. An apple-tree, a pear-tree, a horse, a lion, are characters; but a good apple-tree or a bad, is an apple-tree still. A horse is not more a lion for being a bad horse—that is its character. Its goodness or badness is another consideration.

He is fond of showing how, from a little change in the angle of vision, Hell becomes Heaven and devils are seen as angels. The only discipline his system implies is that of Art: the insistence upon the concrete as opposed to the abstract; the immediate approach to those "minute particulars" which he mentions so often; the duty of understanding and expressing persons as against judging and condemning them. All other discipline was evil. He would have nothing to do with natural laws, moral codes, rational systems, and all the dead weight of institutions. There was no other gospel, he said, "than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination." That way alone brought man to the supreme reality. "The world of imagination is the world of eternity."

The strength of this view of things may be found in his art. This consists for the most part of drawings, usually engraved and sometimes tinted afterwards in watercolor, made either for his own poems, which were published in this way, being themselves engraved, or as sets of illustrations for such works as Young's "Night Thoughts," Blair's "The Grave," the Book of Job, and Dante. He also made a great many individual drawings and paintings (in what he considered to be the manner of the early fresco painters), such as his famous "Ghost of a Flea." In all these things there is a strange imaginative splendor and force. We see in them the fine fruits of what he called the "great and golden rule of art," which was that "the more distinct and sharp and wiry the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art;" though his coloring is delicate, curiously prismatic. Few artists have ever excelled him in embodying sublime ideas in precise and memorable images. In his finest work he can touch both grandeur and an exquisite tenderness.

It is, however, with his poetry that we are chiefly concerned here. His great theme as a poet may be discovered, as Raleigh once pointed out, in an essay on Blake that everybody should read, in the title he gave to the best of his books: "Songs of Innocence and of Experience, showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul." His problem was (in Raleigh's words): "To reconcile the surprising and grave lessons of experience with those joyous revelations which come to eyes newly opened upon the world." His earlier and more famous poems simply express those joyous revelations. He began by going straight back to the Elizabethans, as the songs in his earliest volume, "Poetical Sketches," amply demonstrate. It is astonishing how little the young poet—and all the poems in this volume were written in his 'teens—is troubled by the influence of his own time. Most of us, if we were asked to find such songs as "My silks and fine array," "When silver snow decks Sylvia's clothes," "How sweet I roamed from field to field," would turn to the First Book in Palgrave's "Golden Treasury," forgetting that they were written by a young eighteenth century engraver. More astonishing than these, however, is the "Mad Song"—

The wild winds weep,
And the night is a-cold;
Come hither, Sleep,
And my griefs enfold. . . .

in which Blake's lyrical genius first shoots up like a rocket. If it were not for this one song, we could say that it was only in the next volume, the "Songs of Innocence," that he finds his own manner. Here indeed is the poetry of "eyes newly opened upon the world;" these songs are like happy innocence itself piping in the field, like the very daisies in the grass. They describe an earth that has not yet discovered the Tree of Knowledge. They are filled with green fields and blossoms, the lambs' innocent call, the tiny unquestioning sorrows and the happy sports of childhood. We see, as in "Holy Thursday," the "thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent

hands." Night itself is only the signal for another happy pageant to begin:

Fare well, green fields and happy grove,
Where flocks have ta'en delight.
Where lambs have nibbled, silent move
The feet of angels bright;
Unseen, they pour blessings,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

These are the innocent cries of children turned into poetry, little flutings from the Golden Age, and there is nothing quite like them in all literature. In this handful of tiny lyrics Blake did something once and for all.

When we arrive at the Songs of Experience, we have passed out of that Golden Age and into another and sadder world. This is what Blake sees so clearly, and his one desire is to reconcile innocence and experience and restore that Golden Age, to build Jerusalem—as he says—in England's green and pleasant Land. We cannot follow his thought as it twists through these and the later poems until at last it loses itself in the dark wilderness of the Prophetic Books. It is sufficient to say that it is a growing elaboration of the doctrine we have already noticed, with its faith in the imagination, its distrust of the rational faculty, its insistence upon mutual forgiveness; though it is worth pointing out that there is irony in the history of Blake's thought, for the seer in him created a system in which life is viewed from the standpoint of the artist, just to satisfy the artist in him, but gradually took control and finally hindered instead of helped the artist. It is difficult, perhaps impossible in the long run, for the mystic and the artist to own the same allegiance, and one must give way at last to the other. We need not be surprised to find that the poetry that embodies this doctrine is perhaps the most strangely unequal in our language. It is frequently filled with lazy rhymes, absurd imagery, and obscurities, until at last it is neither musical nor comprehensible. But at its best its splendor of imagination takes our breath away. It is the lyric touched with sublimity:

Bring me my Bow of burning gold!
Bring me my Arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

In another key, there is this—

Ah, Sunflower, weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun.

And again, the sheer black magic of

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night.

He can make his thought flash out poetry, as in such a thing as this:

Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs and flaming hair.

Some of the couplets in his famous "Auguries of Innocence" are as droll as an old woodcut, but others have the beauty of some lost age of innocence:

The wild deer wand'ring here and there
Keep the human soul from care.

But there is all of him, his mysticism and homely speech, his profundity and quaint simplicities, in this poem, which could only have been written by one who was at once a seer, an artist, and still something of a child:

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower;
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

There is no space for more. We have said nothing of those proverbs of his, in which profound truth and hearty prejudice are so richly mingled. But one of them returns to the mind: "He whose face gives no light shall never become a star." More than one observer has told us how he saw the face of William Blake brighten before him. Now, when a hundred years have gone by, he has become a star.

Sir Harry Johnston, explorer, author, painter, and pioneer in the colonization of Africa, died recently at the age of sixty-nine. His main field of interest lay in his explorations and in the administration of sections of British Equatorial Africa, but during his last years literature absorbed his energies. Among his most successful books was "The Gay Dombey," a novel which under the guise of being a sequel to Dickens's tale, introduced actual figures of contemporary England into its story.

A Guide-Post to Beauty

NEW BACKGROUNDS FOR A NEW AGE.

By EDWIN AVERY PARK. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927. \$5.

Reviewed by TALBOT F. HAMLIN

HERE in modern America our cities are heaved high in jagged peaks; some strange energy seems constantly to force the piled buildings into the air. Steel and concrete and brick mount up into a fantastic and unreal romanticism. And their foundations are driven deep by clattering drills or throbbing, straining steam shovels, as though modernity sought as much the depths under the earth as the air above. Steel are the drills; the steam shovel is steel; steel the girders and the columns that lace the sky as the building rises, and the plumes of steam or the acrid exhausts of gasoline engines are everywhere.

Something has happened to us. Change—of environment, of tempo, of our ways of living—is forced on us, with apparently ever increasing speed, by a relentless industrialism of steam and machines. We are breathless in our continued effort at adjustment, all our ideals seem sliding and shifting under the impact of novelty, like a breaking sea fog in a southerly breeze. What is beauty in such a changing world? Where in the strange new forms shall a man look to feed his eyes and his soul?

Some of us turn back, bewildered, and from the city of ten thousand elevators retire in our newest motor to the white colonial house (its austerity buttressed on one side by a Tudor cottage and on the other by an Italian villa) to spend the evening before a gracious colonial fireplace, in gracious anachronistic Queen Anne chairs. Others swing as blindly away from all that has been; to them anything is bad, impossible, absurd, that was made, painted, written, or composed ten or more years ago. In their ludicrous arrogance they love ugliness only because the past loved beauty, and worship the devil because the past worshipped God. Both these flights from reality are twin absurdities grown of a single bewilderment.



"New Backgrounds for a New Age" is the first important book by an American for Americans to attempt the guidance of us all through the adventure of esthetic experience in such a time. And the reading of it is in itself an adventure, for Mr. Park has seen, with a vision acute sometimes to bitterness, that no art can be appreciated without the deepest understanding of the *milieu* that produced it, and his examination of the present state and future opportunities of American interior decoration (what a banal subject, were a banal mind to treat it!) becomes the most exciting and most unconventional examination of modern life as a whole I have had the fortune to read.

This is inevitable and exhilarating. For to see modern life through the sensitive eyes of Mr. Park is to get a sense of throbbing reality. He does not attempt to regularize, to standardize. Sensitive to the old beauty he does not, like the Frenchman, Le Corbusier, (whose thinking in a way parallels his own), become merely intoxicated with novelty; his background is too scholarly for that. He, like so many of us, feels that heart-clutching nostalgia for the old gracious artistic aristocracy of *le temps jadis*, when artists worked for patrons themselves artists. He, too, feels the terrible danger of mediocrity that comes pressing upon the artist like a black cloud when he serves a democratic *clientèle*. He knows the danger of the ideal of quantity production; he is bitterly aware of all the crudities and noisiness of modern America.

All this is common enough. But Mr. Park has the sense to see that flight from the reality is no cure; whether it is the flight to the terrace of the *Dôme*, or the flight to period rooms. The sensitive American today confronted with the helter-skelter litter of modern industrialism Mr. Park finds like "a tired person confronting an enormous pile of soiled dishes to be washed, sorted, stacked, and put away. We are weary with the excess of creating the situation . . . and slow to begin the everlasting toil of clearing up. Yet, when the task is done, . . . what a beautiful job it is." But he also realizes "progress—has little place for sentiment. Inexorably the outlived must give way before the stern demand for growth, which cannot be stopped." And he paints an ironic picture of the antique shops lining a street with competing wares of Colonial

or baroque types—the eternal conventionalism of our flight from reality. Advertising, too, "sugar-coated with alluring illustrations, . . . must . . . exert an influence profound enough to be discernible in our other arts. Through shrewdly taking advantage of the weakness of humanity, by appeals to the sentiments in order to sell, advertising fosters the cult of the unreal, and deadens any effort to be honest." It is not a pretty picture; Mr. Park's bitterness is easily justified.

The solution can only come with a frank acceptance of modern life and modern machines. With this acceptance will arrive instant recognition of new beauty born of modernity. The beauty incarnate already in aeroplane, automobile, or dynamo, the beauty of *here* and *now* will dominate our architecture, our furniture, our decoration. We are starved for that beauty. "We crave to be based on here and now," says Mr. Park; no periodism can allay that craving, nor give us that spiritual relaxation that beauty should furnish.

It is thus as a guide book to this new beauty that "New Backgrounds for a New Age" is most revolutionary and most satisfactory. The beauty of a machine age is a beauty impersonal, stark, efficient, non-sentimental—above all non-sentimental. "As a symbol of our age," says Mr. Park, in the chapter "The Tempo of Modern Art," "I conceive a man standing solitary with outstretched arms and face upraised beneath the noon sky. There are no long



WILLIAM BLAKE

From a portrait on ivory by John Linnell

shadows. Everywhere objects stand revealed pitilessly in the brilliant bath of light. There are few secrets . . . little save the eternal mystery of life, which is the upturned face." There is no fuzziness of outline possible in any such conception of beauty; it is in a stark simplicity almost harsh that Mr. Park sees the divinity. His is a factual beauty, not a veil, gay, sometimes, but never luxurious, powerful, but never haunting, with little mystic connotation.

And there lies the difficulty, which the author is brave enough to realize and accept. "Indeed this is not an age of faith. Yet man is incapable of life without faith." And he seeks in the chapter on education to show the child who is to become an artist that he is becoming "the priest of beauty." Nevertheless the beauty to be worshipped seems a hard and sometimes cruel beauty; that sense is over the book, like a doom. It is the explanation of the pervading nostalgia, rising at times to bitterness, for a past sweet, romantic, mystical, attractive as a forsworn vice. It is the ideal of a Puritan, this beauty, that seems almost like Wordsworth's "Stern daughter of the voice of God—"

Is this the road we must all follow? Is beauty, then, only the function of an age, a sort of rationalization of the environment that fate forces on one so as to make it acceptable? Is beauty itself merely a comfortable illusion that present things which work are sweet? Supposing today one should find suddenly for the first time "Prometheus Unbound," written yesterday by some unknown poet? Or suppose that one should all unknowing suddenly swing face to face with the gorgeous sweeping lines of the "Winged Victory," carved the day before by an unknown sculptor? Should one then restrain the quickly drawn breath because in them there is neither the starkness nor sharpness nor simple

efficiency of a dynamo, or the abstraction of Brancusi?

Each of us creates his own beauty; none can deny us that inestimable privilege. To one, the Puritan revolutionist, the angles and abstractions of machinery, to another the cloudy magic of Machen, to another the suave sensuousness of Pierre Louy's foreword to Aphrodite. Let each create as he may, let each appreciate as he can—but, radical or conservative, we all can be grateful for "New Backgrounds for a New Age," the best introduction to Modernist art yet written in English.

An Ideal History

A HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD.

By MICHAEL ROSTOVITZEFF. New York: Oxford University Press. 1927. 2 vols. \$5 each.

Reviewed by C. W. MENDELL
Yale University

THE appearance of the second volume of Rostovtzeff's "Ancient History" makes possible now a real appreciation of the scope and quality of this work. The modest preface of the first volume is even more amazing and more admirable in its restraint with the whole "Outline" before the reader.

Here at last is a readable history of the ancient world within reasonable limits of size done by a master of the subject with a touch that inspires confidence. The omission of all footnotes and references has simply the effect of making the volume more attractive to read without ever arousing the painful suspicion that the absence of references indicates any lack of familiarity with the sources. The book has a note of authority throughout. We have had a reasonably good library history of Greece although not so good a one as Rostovtzeff's first volume which in addition gives the Oriental background. We have never had a history of Rome which approaches his second volume in value both to the general reader and to the student of history.

Outstanding in these volumes is the superb use of illustration. None of the old hackneyed pictures that have been familiar for generations turn up here. The plates are extraordinarily numerous and clear and they are all from the very best and latest finds. Archaeology has never served history so well. Opposite each plate is a brief description which insures its effectiveness and proves what is stated in the preface, that the author's object in presenting his illustrations "has not been merely to amuse and entertain my readers."

It is very satisfying in a history of this sort to find the author ready to admit the real problems which are not and cannot be finally settled. This has perhaps its best illustration in the treatment of Augustus. Rostovtzeff makes it absolutely clear that no formula can be devised to cover succinctly the form of government developed by the first emperor. The results of Augustus's work can be and are described clearly and vividly but there is nothing to be gained by trying to define them with a formula. Also he admits frankly that we do not know and never shall know whether Augustus considered himself or wished to be considered a god.

It is a temptation to enumerate at great length the virtues of a history of this sort but such is hardly the function of a review. It is worth while to indicate the method which holds the attention of the reader throughout. The volume on Rome begins with a bold statement of the problem of unity. "Why did Rome, just such a city-state as Athens or Sparta, succeed in solving the puzzle which had baffled both Athens and Sparta?" This puzzle was the creation of a single power with a single army and a rich treasury controlling a world empire. The working out of this problem through the formation and the disintegration of the Roman empire is the real essence of the book. The last chapter suggests the causes for the disintegration of Rome again without any attempt at a formula.

Throughout the text, dates are infrequent but the chronology is never in doubt. In this way, as in every other, the greatest convenience of the reader is always assured. A chronological table, a carefully selected bibliography of the more modern reference books, and an index at the end of each volume serve the same purpose.

A word should be said about the handling of one of the most difficult problems in such a history as this. Rostovtzeff calls his work an outline but it is very much more. It is a real history and the