

in his pages about marriage customs, vendetta, robber chiefs, tribal fealty, etc., would furnish forth, in expert hands, a dozen attractive films. I give the reader three samples of his ethnographic goods, in the hope that they will cause some to turn to a volume richly paying perusal:

1. Entire villages in the Caucasus are following one hereditary trade—there is a hatmakers' village, a saddle-makers' village, and—marvel of marvels!—a village where all the inhabitants are brought up to the profession of itinerant poets, called Ashuks. The Ashuks are exceedingly quarrelsome and yet, in a way, clan-nish.

2. It appears that in Daghestan the degree, "Master of Fragrance," is publicly bestowed upon certain skilful compounders of essences and odors, wherewith the bindings and pages of books are sprinkled or fumigated, so as to stress the character and give an indication of the contents of each book so treated.

3. In the Caucasus, as in other parts of the Islamic world, a bride is bought by the tender of money to the prospective father-in-law. The money is frequently paid in instalments, during the initial years of wedded life. The essential unsoundness of trading on the instalment plan is nowhere more apparent. Imagine a man paying for a girl on the "twenty dollars down and ten dollars each time you are hard up" plan. There is, of course, that well-known joker in small type in the contract blank, declaring the entire amount due, ten days after default of a single payment. All managers of subscription-book concerns know what "pulling a set" means. It is a painful process—but what is pulling a set compared with pulling a girl? On my travels through the Caucasus, the tombstone of one of these victims of the Easy Payment Plan was pointed out to me. It bore the following deeply affecting inscription: *Hic iacet Achmet Ali Khan—qui perdidit uxorem dilectam—et cum uxore vitam. Siste, viator—et disce, monitus: Ne tradas sine nummo! (Anglice: Here rests Achmet Ali Khan, who lost his beloved wife, and with her, his life—stay, wanderer, and being warned, learn this: Never trade, unless you have the coin!)*

It is good news that the widespread and disastrous thefts from university libraries may be checked by the arrest of a suspect who is to stand trial in a short time. The losses were extensive, the books taken were of importance, and there was every indication that a new and particularly vicious practice was being criminally organized. If the suspect proves to be guilty we hope that there will be no question as to an adequate punishment. Public libraries and particularly university libraries in this country are organized with singular liberality, and the freedom with which books, both common and rare, cheap and valuable, are put at the disposition of vast numbers of readers, has played no small part in the education of the American public. Some "leakage" is to be expected, due usually to absent-mindedness or carelessness, but an organized and skilful attempt to make profits through felonious sale of university and public property in books, if successful and unpunished, might lead to serious restrictions upon the reading habits of the public. Library thieving is mean thieving and vicious thieving, for it hurts a hundred instead of one.

"Poor Samuel Smiles," says the London *Observer*, "has acquired a lot of unpopularity in the course of his century, and now Canon A. J. Carlyle has been describing him in public as a 'fool' and a 'donkey.' That is a little hard on a man who wrote 'Self-Help' with the best intentions in the world, and put into it, like a wise author, just the things that everybody (or nearly everybody) thought at that time. The *laissez faire* idea was one of the wrong turnings of thought which have helped to get us into our present troubles, but it was not Samuel Smiles who invented it, but people much more important, whom no Canon would venture to describe as 'donkeys.' And, after all, is there so much difference between 'Self-Help' and 'Safety First'?"

Mining Frenzy

THE BIG BONANZA: The Story of the Comstock Lode. By C. B. GLASSCOCK. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1931. \$3.50.

Reviewed by EDWIN L. SABIN

MR. GLASSCOCK'S narrative details the rise and fall of that extraordinary mining field, in western Nevada about thirty miles down from the Sierra Nevada line of California, where the operations along the remarkable Comstock silver lode made financial history, and where today the ghost town of Virginia City and miles of disintegrated workings wait for a resurrection.

The "Washoe rush" of the winter of 1859-1860 and the succeeding spring, into the desolate, wind-swept Washoe Country of an indefinite "Western Utah," was sectional, being entirely from a Northern California crazed by the report that over east of the mountains there were ledges of solid silver set on edge like silver dollars. But although the excitement was confined, in the main, to the Pacific Coast, and the financial jugglery centered there, the name Comstock has been widely known as signifying the high-tide of mining frenzy and of sudden wealth, of profligate spending, and of reckless stock manipulation.

It is a name that engaged the attention of Congressional lobbyists, debaters, and committees. It is a name upon which huge fortunes, in evidence years after the collapse of the bonanzas, and still active, were founded. For within two decades, or up to 1881, the Comstock mines produced \$306,000,000 in bullion, the most of it in a bonanza period of five years in the 'seventies; and of this sum two properties, the Consolidated Virginia and the California, produced \$105,000,000. With the history of the Comstock are associated the names Hearst, Mackay of the Postal Telegraph and the Commercial Cable (rivals to the Gould interests), Fair, and Flood who, like Mackay, sought to corner the wheat market, Darius Ogden Mills the head of a distinguished line, E. J. ("Lucky") Baldwin, Senator William M. Stewart, Mark Twain, Oelrichs, Vanderbilt, and many another of national and of world repute.

The "big bonanza" refers particularly to the enormous body of fabulously rich ore opened in the Consolidated Virginia and the California by the owners, Fair, Mackay, Flood, and O'Brien. The great strike, just preceding, by Jones and Hayward in the Crown Point, and by the Bank of California syndicate in the Belcher, might be included. As a forecast of coming events Crown Point stock jumped from \$2 a share to \$1,825, and Belcher rocketed from \$1.50 to \$1,525! There can never be another Comstock.

However, when, in 1869, James Fair and John Mackay, pick and shovel laborers turned mine operators, James Flood and William O'Brien, San Francisco saloon-keepers, of Irish blood all, asquired 1,310 feet of supposedly barren ground between two proven properties, the Comstock stocks were at low ebb. The erratic lode seemed to have been sacked. But after four years of exploration of the Consolidated Virginia, chiefly through the bloodhound persistence of Fair (who had "a nose for ore") a tricky lead an eighth of an inch thick widened to seven feet, twelve feet, fifty-four feet, ninety-five feet, assaying up to \$650 a ton.

The wonder grew. The first estimate of the values in sight, as broadcast in the Territorial Enterprise which had served as a medium for young Sam Clemens's lively humor was, \$116,748,000 displayed in a formation 150 to 320 feet wide. The following estimate by the mining expert Deidesheimer was \$1,500,000,000. The director of the mint at Carson City pronounced for \$300,000,000 in sight and untold millions farther in. The Consolidated Virginia began to ship \$250,000 in bullion a month, and the California soon was fattening the flow.

Within a short time Messrs. Fair, Mackay, Flood, and O'Brien, as majority stockholders, according to Mr. Glasscock, were dividing among themselves over a million

dollars a month in dividends. Minor stockholders shared in the output—the monthly dividend from either mine rose to \$1,080,000. Consolidated Virginia stock that had been bought at \$45 in September, 1874, was quoted at \$610 in December and reached \$700 in January; California stock at \$37 soared to \$780. The 1,310 feet of ground valued in 1869 at \$40,000 to \$50,000 was worth, in 1874, upon stock-market basis, \$160,000,000.

The whole Comstock felt the impetus. Anything relating to the Comstock "went." Whereas the Comstock had been "in borrasca" (on the shoals) now it was "in bonanza" (into fortune). The Comstock shares, as listed, good and bad, aggregated almost \$400,000,000. The amount of footage represented exceeded the total footage of the mines. In a day shares of stock were bought and sold again at an advance



THE MINER (FROM A PORTRAIT BY BENTON)

of \$100. The transfers of one stock board in San Francisco, principally on margins, was \$50,000,000 in a month. The recent spasm of national speculation, culminating in 1929, and pointed out by Mr. Glasscock as another example of wild finance, somewhat reflects that mad gamble of 1874-1875 which concentrated at the Pacific Coast.

And when the bears finally gained the upper hand by insistence that the market was sold short and that the Comstock was largely on paper there came the panic which, in the summer of 1875, hit the Comstock stocks for a decline of \$60,000,000 in less than a week, toppled the great and powerful Bank of California, and ruined thousands of people, high and low. The effect upon the Big Bonanza itself, however, was slight while the ore was there. Fair, Mackay, Flood, and O'Brien did not depend upon stock inflation for their prosperity. Nevertheless the close arrived in 1879. The available treasure vaults of the Comstock had been emptied at top speed. Consolidated Virginia stock listed at \$1.90; California stock at \$1.25. The valuation of the thirty mines on the lode dropped from the \$393,000,000 of those bonanza days to a beggarly \$7,000,000.

A score and more of chronicles dealing with the Comstock have been published, but Mr. Glasscock's comprehensive story brings the action down to the very present. He is enabled to remind us that contact with the Big Bonanza still exists, as witness the much discussed union of Irving Berlin and Ellin Mackay, granddaughter of John Mackay the Irish immigrant and Comstock magnate. Since the book was written a claimant to the Flood estate has figured in the California courts. Moreover, Comstock millions, including those of Adolph Sutro who drove the Sutro tunnel in spite of Comstock opposition were applied to vast enterprises, public and private, not only in California and Nevada but elsewhere, and these endure as monuments to wealth which, acquired whether legitimately or illegitimately, was well expended.

With one or two exceptions the illustrations for "The Big Bonanza" are reproductions of old views and portraits.

Familiar Birds

WHY BIRDS SING. By JAQUES DELAMAIN. Translated by RUTH and ANNA SARASON. New York: Coward-McCann. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY

THIS book, "crowned by the French Academy," must be judged as a translation. From this it doubtless suffers for, while not without fine passages, it also abounds in unidiomatic phrases, strange punctuation, and incorrect uses or forms of English words.

As to the substance of the work, it presents a series of compositions played on one string, which reveal the keen observation and esthetic spirit of a gifted naturalist. Descriptions of the habits of many familiar birds of France, and hence of most of western Europe, are fresh, exact, full of *verve*, and rich in information. The imagery, and the implications of many factual matters upon life and thought, are neat and typically Gallic, while familiar concepts of ornithology are so worded that they are driven home. Only among the woods, fields, and wildernesses of the land, we are told, has bird music reached a high plane; the sea has not a single singer. The flock spirit kills the artist; it is the birds of large family territory which reach the heights of song. Moreover, bad influence may degrade, and if the lyrical blackcap chances to nest in a marshy region its pure melody becomes tainted by the raucous notes of the sedge warbler.

When it comes to a biological interpretation of certain behavior patterns of birds, the general reader of Delamain's book is less likely to be helped than led astray. There is no evidence, for example, that instincts proceed from ancestral habits. Neither do most birds migrate southward because of a change or shortage of their natural food; on the contrary, many leave while the supply is still waxing. And as for the idea that birds are conscious "musicians," striving for individual preeminence and appreciative of the efforts of their fellows—plenty of experimental evidence stands to show that this is sheer fantasy.

A Balanced Ration for a Week's Reading

THE HARBOURMASTER. By WILLIAM MCFEE. Doubleday, Doran.

A chronicle not so much of the sea as of a man of the sea.

WHAT DARE I THINK? By JULIAN HUXLEY. Harpers.

A discussion along ethical and biological lines.

THE LITERARY MIND. By MAX EASTMAN. Scribners.

A study of the psychology of literature.

The Saturday Review

OF LITERATURE

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY Editor

AMY LOVEMAN Managing Editor

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

Contributing Editor

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Contributing Editor

NOBLE A. CATHCART Publisher

Published weekly by the Saturday Review Co., Inc., Henry Seidel Canby, President; Roy E. Larsen, Vice-President; Noble A. Cathcart, Secretary-Treasurer, 25 West 45th Street, New York. Subscription rates per year, postpaid, in the U. S. and Mexico, \$3.50; in Canada, \$5; in Great Britain, 18 shillings; elsewhere \$4.50. All business communication should be addressed to 25 West 45th Street, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 1, 1879, Vol. 8, No. 24. The Saturday Review is indexed in the "Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature."

Copyright, 1931, by the Saturday Review Co., Inc.

A Crop of Stories

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1931 AND THE YEARBOOK OF THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY. Edited by EDWARD J. O'BRIEN. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1931. \$2.50.

THE BEST BRITISH SHORT STORIES OF 1931. The same.

Reviewed by ROBERT WHITCOMB

MR. O'BRIEN, now one of America's literary institutions, rests his reputation upon his unerring punctuality, his undoubted assiduousness, his statistical genius, and his controversial judgments. Every year since the World War he has had a volume of the "best" short stories of the year prepared, whether the publishers would take them or not (most of the time they have). His yearly pronouncements on the art of short story writing usually harvest a bumper crop of hair-splittings, thus placing Mr. O'Brien among those few authors who know without a doubt that their productions are read by somebody. But so scientific are his categories that it would be impossible to prove him wrong, as so many tried to do when he started in the "best" short story business.

For instance, he arranges his authors strictly according to the alphabet, the short stories neatly compiled, and then he tags on (in the American volume) a glossary of abbreviations, lists of magazines publishing this and that, a Roll of Honor, biographical notes, lists of books and articles on the subject of short stories, and mathematical percentages of "distinctive" short stories, and so on, ending with an index and all interspersed with a system of asterisks to indicate merit or demerits, even as it was in school. Nevertheless and notwithstanding the science he uses, there is plenty of room for questioning his choices.

In this year's introduction to the American short stories (there is none to speak of in the English compilation) Mr. O'Brien commits himself on trends, shortly and sweetly—and firmly. He emphasizes last year's conviction that the transition period in American writing has passed on from ferment to integration, indeed, that the transition period is definitely passé, or at least moribund, and it is to be recorded that he says this in defiance of the voluminous wordage creatively collected by the behaviorists. Then, pointing his finger, he gives the experimental magazines a boost, saying that writers who appear in them generally get into more permanent places later. He mentions some of these authors specifically, including Kay Boyle, the latest. This, however, is not the only way in which he boosts the experimental sheets. He reprints several stories from them, including such fugitives as *Story*, *This Quarter*, *Hound and Horn*, *The Midland*, *The American Oxonian*, *The Frontier*, and *Experiment*. Indeed, this may prove to be Mr. O'Brien's chief usefulness. Who else would take the trouble to dig out these actual works of art, things by unknown names? The "best" short stories may have ideological deficiencies, but at least a few writers who are dealing with feudal editorial dictatorship can here have one short flight of freedom. Mr. O'Brien has taken up the idea of becoming an editor of editors. It is an old gag, but now we have it in action with new writers, as well as older ones, even though the result is an anthology of decidedly uneven reading.

In the American book are some good ones, and also some bad ones. Three of them come from the *Saturday Evening Post*: one of William Hazlett Upson's salesman stories about earthworm tractors, in which Salesman Botts gets rid of yet another tractor in Italy; a visionary and unusual sea story, by Guy Gilpatrick; and a new one by F. Scott Fitzgerald about an American situation in Paris, one of several stories about expatriates chosen by Mr. O'Brien. The *American Mercury* also gets three stories: "The Enigma," by Louis Adamic, told with Slavic intensity and good prose; "That Evening Sun Go Down," by the inevitable William Faulkner; and an Americanese anecdote by George Mil-

burn. *Story*, a mimeographed magazine just out, published in Austria, has three stories: a skit by Kay Boyle; a French-American mood full of French words by Whit Burnett, to whom, incidentally, Mr. O'Brien dedicates the book under discussion; and "One With Shakespeare," a fine study of adolescent female artistic egotism by one Martha Foley. Two stories come from the *Cosmopolitan*: an excellent one by Louis Bromfield, probably the best story in the book; and a sketch of some newlyweds by Dorothy Parker that is amusing in spite of some sexual hinting. The most workmanlike story in the book is a lengthy psychological discussion of an artist and his woman in a lonely, mountainous spot, by Alvah C. Bessie, published originally in *The Hound*



ILLUSTRATION BY EDWARD ARDIZZONE FROM "MODERN BOOK ILLUSTRATION"

and *Horn*. Mr. Bessie is a newcomer to be reckoned with. One of the most enjoyable bits of writing anywhere is the story from *This Quarter* by Josephine Herbst, and the provincialism of Lowry Charles Winberly, the only thing from the *Forum*, uses some new Americanesque.

Mr. O'Brien's tabulation of English short stories seems simpler, although the separation of English from American seems quite arbitrary sometimes. Anyhow, it seems that modern English stories are taking on the American tinge, and becoming readable. Mr. O'Brien's favorite English magazines are the *London Mercury* (six stories), *This Quarter* (three stories), the *Adelphi*, and the *New Statesman*.

"Poppied Corn"

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF RICHARD BURTON. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1931.

Reviewed by O. W. FIRKINS

Darkness and doubt and despair
Vanish at touch of the May!
Songs? It inhabits the air;
Love? It bewitches the way.

A POET stands at the tent-flap or door-post. To the sentinel asking for a countersign, to the lord of the manor asking for a signet-ring, I offer that stanza. Admission will not be delayed.

Mr. Alfred Kreyborg in a sympathetic and discriminating preface speaks of these poems as the outcome of "human love, fellowship, labor, song, philosophy, faith." These things or their spectra, can be found elsewhere. What was once usual but is now rare is their combination with literature and skill. Many people exist to whom that combination is dear and for whom its appearance in contemporary work is always a rarer experience and a lessening hope. That audience pre-exists. It may or may not be an audience which, in present-day conditions of reviewership and readership, it will be easy to marshal and convene.

The volume confirms and illustrates the lyricist's confession (or avowal) in the second of the two introductory poems that he chants or paints nothing but his own soul. We get only lyric and we get pure lyric. Drama there is none, though a three page dialogue called the Prologue is perhaps the intellectual (not the artistic) summit of the collection. There is no real narrative here; the ballads with which a typical short-span writer, a typical lyricist

like Whittier, diversifies and objectifies his work, are undiscoverable in Richard Burton's work. The author is a critic, scholar, and teacher; the lyrics, very fittingly and wisely, have shaken from their plumes the dust of shelf and desk. Not Herrick, not Heine, not Verlaine, is more exclusively and unreservedly lyrical.

All this implies a deep subjectivity, a jealous subjectivity that will not give place, will not suffer encroachment, even from ballad to anecdote. Nevertheless, poems are, on one side, objective. Their incitements are objective. The inner life waits for a signal, a beacon, from the outer life. It may surprise the reader that in three hundred markedly and purely lyrical poems the love-poems should be so few, and, apart from the "Last Stile" (exceptional in this as in its high and perfect beauty), should be so detached, so impersonal. What is left for the pure singer, the singer of pure self, to do but hymn his love?

Of this there is a possible and pointed explanation. Life is self-repeating, is a pattern. In this pattern, deep, lasting passions and high poetry—their consequence—may appear. But there is a part of life that is not patterned, a part from day to day is unforeseeable, and the poems of Richard Burton are occasional in the sense that, not their substance, but their immediate promptings and suggestions are drawn from the general, shifting, planless course of things, from life at large. They are drawn largely, almost predominantly from landscape; from a sight in the street, from a phrase in a book; from a strain of music, from a reviving memory. The great permanencies of feeling, the blood-bond, the love-clasp, hardly appear, though what we may call the general response to life, to particular suggestion in life—the tenderesses, the humanities, the compassions—is wakeful, warm, and constant. In the elegy on his friend, the Minnesota poet, Arthur Upson, he almost, or quite, transcends this limitation, and produces a threnody which for pure feeling (not, of course, for flawless and exalted art) is better than either "Lycidas" or "Thyrsis." I quote the XIIIth, XVIIth, and XVIIIth stanzas:

I hardly know if sorrow or content
Have mastery as I brood upon thy loss:
Such comforting large thoughts are
somewhat blent
With haunting pain; the shadow of a
cross
Is all uplit with radiance, and a voice
Weeping, becomes a voice that doth re-
joice.

* * *
Then felt I need of thee to share the
sight:
It was too delicate to win the praise
Of many easy-moved to quick delight
In obvious skies that follow usual
days;
But this, so marvelous in mood and
tone,
This afterglow seemed meant for us
alone.

Alas, the summer waits thee! All her
shows
Heaped up and heavenly proffer thee
their boon,
And yet in vain the great procession
goes;
Its chronicler no more beneath the
moon,
Nor when the noon is high, walks as of
yore:
Thy passing hath bereaved both sea
and shore,
The very sea seems silent evermore!

Two things remain to be said: a reservation and a tribute. The behavior of these poems is admirable. That is a merit; but they are perhaps a little too conscious of the perfection of their own behavior. Personally, I believe in bounds: against all the slack revolts and nerveless mutinies of my contemporaries, I believe in bounds as the means to enfranchisements. Poetry should have its hedge, but in my garden, if I owned a garden, that hedge should be invisible. The pales which keep out trespass and ravage should be so interlaced

with creeper and hawthorn that the orchard close itself should seem to be merely a part of the bosage or the wildwood. In Richard Burton's verse that hedge is visible.

Branching from the same stem as this defect is one of the great superiorities of the book. It images, it records, it embodies, a life that is more real and greater than itself; it is one of the few testimonies in latter-day verse to the possibility of such a life. In one of the drawings shown by Jane Eyre to Rochester, under a sullen sky a cormorant holds in its beak a gemmed bracelet; a drowning swimmer thrust up from the deep the arm from which that bracelet had been snatched. Most poetry today is like that bracelet: most poets are like the drowning swimmer (the cormorant is the publisher). Richard Burton's poetry is not the salvage of a spent and wasted life; it is the record and the promise of high being. I close with eight lines entitled "A Potion."

How brew the brave drink Life?
Take of the herb hight morning-joy,
Take of the herb hight evening-rest,
Pour in pain lest bliss should cloy,
Shake in sin to give it zest;
Brew them all in the heat of noon,
Cool the broth beneath the moon;
Then down with the brave drink Life!

Oscar W. Firkins, professor of comparative literature at the University of Minnesota, is one of the outstanding poetry critics of the country.

Defense of Nothing

IN DEFENSE OF TOMORROW. By ROBERT DOUGLAS BOWDEN. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by SUZANNE LA FOLLETTE

MR. BOWDEN'S book, one learns from the jacket, was awarded a prize of \$3,000 in a contest on "the soul of America." When I read this impressive information I felt a bit diffident about reviewing the book; for when it comes to the soul of America I may as well frankly confess, in the words of A. Ward, that "I skurcely know what those air." But a careful reading has convinced me that Mr. Bowden skurcely knows either. I start, therefore, where he leaves off, and if I have any luck we may come out about even.

It would be hard to differentiate between Mr. Bowden's concept of the soul of America and that fostered by Mr. Hoover's official ballyhoo-men. His patriotic enthusiasm is no less unbridled and indiscriminate than theirs, and his English no better. "The older European civilization" he exclaims, with more fervor than elegance, "did not cross the Atlantic only to flower more luxuriantly in virgin soil, for the new society in the United States is not merely another Renaissance; it is the creation of new conceptions." These conceptions, one gathers, are about as follows: political and religious liberty, democracy, popular education, a wide distribution of wealth—all informed and directed by the scientific spirit.

Science is the basis of modern civilization because of its utter impartiality and its sense of kinship with a common humanity. . . . Science, founding a firmer basis and stimulating motive for the cooperation of mankind, goes widening down the centuries, and sympathy and pity bind the courses together.

Nothing so exclusively American here, when one comes to reflect upon it; not even Mr. Bowden's dithyramb on science. These conceptions are the common heritage of the Western European peoples. That does not exclude the possibility that the American nation, in applying them practically, has made them peculiarly its own. Unfortunately Mr. Bowden does not convince one that it has; and he fails chiefly, I think, because he has neglected to account, in the true scientific spirit, for all the relevant facts.

When, for example, he dwells on the humanitarian achievements of science, one wonders whether he has forgotten its less humanitarian achievements such as the weapons of modern warfare, which our own Government utilized during the late great war with no more show of