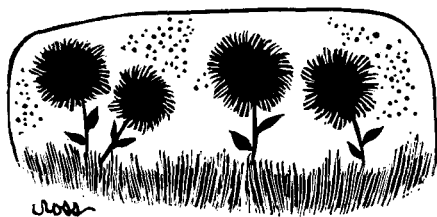


was made by admirers who polemically contrasted his intelligibility with the obscurity of most of the poets who became influential in the Twenties. He could be impatient enough with what seemed to him a faked obscurity, put on to conceal failures of the imagination, but he never suggested that a poem was bad because it was difficult. He knew that his own poems were considerably less simple than most of his admirers believed. In whatever he wrote about the nature of poetry he was careful to avoid dogmatic definitions. He chose to be elusive, even coy, rather than to bind a poet in chains.

There is the same avoidance of commitment in what he wrote about religion. He believed himself to be religious, and often spoke of God, but he adhered to no dogma, and the subtlest of interviewers couldn't pin him



down. He was less ostentatiously melancholy than most of his contemporaries, but he was not what he called "a cheerful Monist," an Emersonian. (Neither was Emerson.) When he was asked whether he felt that his life had been worth living, he said that some days he did and others he didn't. In the last interview he gave, only a few weeks before he died, he said: "I guess I don't take life very seriously. It's hard to get into this world and hard to get out of it. And what's in between doesn't make much sense. If that sounds pessimistic, let it stand. There's been too much vaporous optimism voiced about life and age. Maybe this will provide a little balance."

Frost was always one to want to "provide a little balance," and in politics, which he always took seriously, he was likely to swing from one side of the road to the other. In letters to his friends, especially in the Thirties, he was sometimes dismayingly reactionary: skepticism of utopian ideas and distrust of bureaucracy were strong in him, and occasionally he gave expression to his fears. But he was not frightened by change, and he remained hopeful about the future of this country. When he visited Russia in his late eighties he looked calmly at what he saw, and even reported that Khrushchev was "a grand man." As the public figure he ultimately became, Frost stood for courage and common sense, the critical examination of all dogmas, openness to experience, and the importance of the creative imagination. —GRANVILLE HICKS.

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



No Monstrosity

IN THE REVIEW OF *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, by Justin Kaplan [SR, June 18], the reviewer, A. Grove Day, states that the "monstrous mansion" built by Samuel Clemens is located in East Hartford. In fact, the house is located at 351 Farmington Ave., Hartford, where it has been since it was constructed in 1874.

Mr. Day may consider it to be monstrous, but others have a different opinion. For example, Professor Samuel M. Green of Wesleyan University in his study *American Art—A Historical Survey* describes it as "an unusually eloquent example of bold composition and rich juxtaposition of textures, colors, and materials."

Another authority considers it to be "one of the most interesting entities now extant of the high taste of the 1870s and Eighties."

WALTER K. SCHWINN,
President,
Mark Twain Memorial.

Hartford, Conn.

Benefactor

MICHAEL NOVAK in his reviews of five current Catholic books [SR, June 4] includes the sadly gratuitous calumny: "Catholicism's most reactionary archbishop, Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles." In the past twenty-five years, His Eminence has built more new schools and churches than any prelate in the world. . . .

It ill becomes Mr. Novak to bite the hand that feeds him for, without the millions donated to Stanford University by Southern California conservatives, there would be no "special program of humanities."

PAUL BRINDEL, K.G.

Novato, Calif.

First Sephardic Settlement

IN HIS EXCELLENT REVIEW OF *The Spanish Inquisition*, by Henry Kamen [SR, June 18], Dr. Abram Sachar writes: "The Jewish era in Spain lasted for more than seven centuries, from 711 A.D., when the first Jews came along with the Moorish conquerors . . ." I quote from Dr. Sachar's own volume, *A History of the Jews*: "Jews had been settled in Spain at least as early as the Carthaginian days. . . . Arab hosts crossed the straits into Spain, and in 711, aided by the decadent condition of the Visigothic kingdom, and, doubtless, by the sympathetic attitude of the oppressed Jews, they made themselves masters of the land."

SOLOMON LIPP.

Boston, Mass.

MARK AND MARGOLIS in their *History of the Jewish People* state: "It is certain that Jews were in Spain, at the latest about 300 . . ."

Erwin R. Goodenough in *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* mentions two Jewish tombstones in Spain one of which

is put in the third century and the other, inscribed in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, is dated between the second and sixth centuries.

As early as about 320 a Church Council (Iliberis) enacted anti-Jewish decrees. In 612 King Sisebut issued an edict of conversion or expulsion against the Jews. The Jewish penitential prayers known as "Selichot" contain an alphabetical supplication composed in the "days of the Visigothic persecutions."

SAMUEL DUKER.

New York, N.Y.

Jews had lived in Spain most probably from before the time of Jesus, but certainly before the Council of Elvira (313 A.D.). . . . Besides, it is a myth to regard the existence of the Jews in Spain as an idyl, even within the particular span of 700 years referring to the Moorish presence in parts of Spain. While various Jewish communities flourished there during epochs of uneven length, the most positive thing to be said about Jewish life throughout these 700 years is that it was beset by vicissitudes during 600 of them. It sank to its nadir . . . in 1391, when a chain of pogroms swept the peninsula.

ERIKA SPIVAKOVSKY.

Westport, Conn.

THERE WERE Jews living in Spain during the heyday of the Roman Empire and the theory persists that they may have been there as early as the time of King Solomon.

RABBI ROBERT LAYMAN.

Lausdale, Pa.

AS AN AMERICAN JEW who is not without some experience of Nazi barbarism, Israel's progress and development, and the history of this country, as well as the attitude of non-Jewish Americans—I find Dr. Sachar's concluding paragraph presumptuous and shallow, and a gratuitous and undeserved affront to the countless non-Jews of good will everywhere. Which "many Jewish leaders" he speaks for I know not, but he does not speak for a nonleader like me, and, I suspect, for many simple Jewish Americans who, like me, have and will continue to take kindly sentiments or protestations of amity seriously. . . .

Let's save our doubts and hostilities for our enemies, but grasp hands of friendship.

JOE LEV.

Queens Village, N.Y.

Dismissed

IN REVIEWING *The State of the Nation* [SR, Apr. 23] Arthur Schlesinger dismisses Dalton Trumbo's contribution to the book by calling him a Hollywood hack. Trumbo and Schlesinger have both written junk and both have written nonjunk—for money. . . .

H. MAXWELL LEVY.

Studio City, Calif.

A Room in Ancient Assyria

Nimrud and Its Remains, by M. E. L. Mallowan (Dodd, Mead. 2 Vols. 677 pp. \$60), reconstructs ancient Assyrian life at Nimrud, and describes the discovery of Fort Shalmaneser, a palace fortress. Lynn and Gray Poole are authors of "History of Ancient Olympic Games" and of the forthcoming "One Passion, Two Loves," a biography of Heinrich and Sophia Schliemann, excavators of Troy, Mycenae, and Tiryns.

By LYNN and GRAY POOLE

BY HIS own sense of excitement, the distinguished British archeologist M. E. L. Mallowan manages to involve the reader in the problems of excavation, the thrill of discovery, and the reconstruction of history. It matters whether rain falls on newly exposed wall-paintings, what object is uncovered by a turn of the spade, and that Assyrian royalty of the ninth century B.C. fills blank spaces of chronology.

The ancient military capital Nimrud, the Calah of the Old Testament, is close to Nineveh in a region of Assyria described by Mallowan as the "green downs of the north"—a pleasant contrast to the desert country of Ur where he had dug for six years with Sir Leonard Woolley. The Nimrud expedition, which Mallowan directed, was launched March 17, 1949, 100 years after the publication of *Nineveh and Its Remains*, by Sir Austen Henry Layard, whose Assyrian excavations included a palace at Nimrud from which he removed to the British Museum a great collection of ivories. The twentieth-century expedition began exploration in the palace room where many ivories had been found.

On the very first day of excavation Mallowan demonstrated that sixth sense, the intuitive feeling for historic sites, essential to every great archeologist. Although Layard had published plans of the palace and maps of Nimrud as he had left it, the remains were concealed by a century of wild growth, and were surrounded by the greenery of pastures. Cartographic study was the obvious preliminary to pinpointing the exact place for the start of operations, but Mallowan, unwilling to waste precious time, vaguely gestured to his trained crew to commence digging in a certain general area. Within twenty-four hours mud-brick

walls were uncovered, and within three days it was evident from bits of gold foil and ivory fragments that the digging had started in the precise room planned.

Scholars will fully appreciate that there was nothing casual about the master plan and its execution during the thirteen seasons of excavation that made monumental contributions to archeology. Mallowan's interpretations of ancient evidence and the work of his pioneering predecessors at Nimrud, his presentation of the scope of discovery, his evaluation of major finds, and his predictions for future explorations at Nimrud are authoritative.

The expedition's first season at Nimrud was sufficiently productive to confirm the signs Mallowan refers to as good omens. The luck they brought began early. Previously only one inscribed tablet from Nimrud was known to exist, but Mallowan had been certain in advance of excavation that documents existed and hoped that a library would be found. Even he could not have envisioned the wealth of written records eventually discovered, but, soon after

digging began, fragments of cuneiform tablets were brought to light. A room containing a large collection of inscribed clay tablets was found as early as the end of April 1949.

In subsequent seasons of excavation the walled seat of ancient empires was revealed through contemporary archeological methods. The bulldozer and the crane, the tachometer and the donkey engine became essential to efficient operation. The more than 600 photographs in the two volumes on Nimrud show to what extent the camera was a valuable field tool. Aerial photography and wide-angle and telephoto lenses produced pictures that indicate the size and shape of the 884-acre site, while X-ray photographs aided in the process of restoration. The pages also abound in pictures showing details of large architectural sections and fragmented discoveries.

Scattered throughout the text are maps, plans, and section sketches. In addition, eight large fold-out maps are bound in a hardback cover that fits into

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