AMERICANS IMITATE THE FRENCH ENCYCLOPEDISTS

THIRTY HARD KNOCKS AT AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

ONE gathers from the preface to "Civilization in America" (Harcourt, Brace & Co.) that the thirty men who have collaborated in producing the book think there is the same need for an examination of all our social, political and economic theories that impelled the French encyclopedists to their task. It has been said of those encyclopedists that they "by dissolving in their analytical crucible all consecrated beliefs and fixed institutions brought back into human society of the eighteenth century that humanity which had been so rudely eliminated."

HAROLD E. STEARNS

The century in question was a period of great unrest in France. Democracy was gathering itself for an assault on autocracy. There were signs of it as early as 1729, when Montesquieu wrote from England that "In London there is liberty and equality." A French historian has remarked that Montesquieu was mistaken but that the expression of opinion is notable, for it formulated the motto of the Revolution sixty years before it began. Ten years after Montesquieu's visit to England the Marquis d'Argenson in his "Considerations sur le Gouvernement de la France," declared that two things were necessary to the well-being of the State: "That all the citizens should be equal among themselves and that men should be sons of their labors; the nobles are the drones of the hive." There was then no political freedom in France, no economic freedom and no freedom of thought or of religion. Voltaire had to live on the border of Switzerland so that if steps were taken to punish him in France for his opinions he could step across the frontier into Swiss territory and safety.

I have made this hasty and insufficient summary of conditions that prevailed when the French encyclopedists "dissolving in their analytical crucible all consecrated beliefs," because it is intensely interesting if thirty intelligent and thoughtful Americans are persuaded that conditions in this country are such as to justify a similar "dissolving of consecrated beliefs" in order that the way may be prepared for a better system. Are we in twentieth century America to see a political and economic revolution rumbling in any way that which occurred in eighteenth century France? Even the most cursory reading of this book forces one to the conclusion that the men who wrote it think that something of a revolution is necessary if it is not impending. They are all under forty years old and most of them are under forty. Harold E. Stearns, the editor and directing spirit, is only thirty-one and he is the most pessimistic of the lot. If their views are shared by any considerable number of other men of their generation then something is bound to happen within twenty-five years. If, however, the book is written by a lot of highbrows, that is, as some one has said, men educated beyond their intelligence, then its preparation was merely an exercise in harmless dialectics.

IT IS certainly in part a futile exercise in dialectics. H. L. Mencken's essay on "Politics" is about as ill-informed and unconsidered a diatribe as ever got between the covers of a book. It is made up, first, of a criticism of the constitutional provision requiring Senators and representatives in Congress to be citizens of the States from which they are elected, and praise of the British system which permits a member of Parliament to be elected by any constituency regardless of the place of his residence, as though a system that works well in a centralized government covering a small area would work well in a decentralized federation covering more than half a continent. The second part of Mr. Mencken's essay is devoted to a denunciation of Congress for passing the prohibitory amendment to the Constitution along with the charge that the amendment was jammed through by the anti-saloon people because the congressmen had no moral courage. The man who will seriously charge, as Mr. Mencken does, that Congress did not accurately put into effect the will of the majority of the people in this matter is as narrow-minded and parochial and uninformed as Mr. Mencken charges Congress with being.

Now take John Macy's essay on "Journalism" as another example of futile dialectics. It can be disposed of in a few sentences. Mr. Macy is a writer on literature of wide knowledge and much sanity. Whatever he says on his subject deserves respect. But he was at one time, if not now, a member of the I. W. W., and is at present a Socialist. He entertains the views about newspapers that are not socialistic which are held by all radicals who are displeased because the editors will not permit their space to be used for radical propaganda. The only daily newspaper for which he has a good word is the New York Call, which he calls admirable, and the only weeklies that meet his approval are the New Republic, the Nation and the Freeman, each of which has radical leanings. The American press is far from perfect. Every one connected with it will admit this and every one could make a long list of its defects which would go to the bottom of the matter much more thoroughly than Mr. Macy has gone. Most of them, however, would insist that a great majority of the defects arise from the imperfections of human nature and from the necessary limitations that are placed upon every institution which seeks to have any influence in organized society.

MR. STEARNS himself writes upon "The Intellectual Life" and finds that "the intellectual life of women is practically the intellectual life of the nation." And this intellectual life, he says, is not intellectual at all but sociological. "The question of fundamental ends is seldom raised: for example the desirability of the modern family, the desirability of children growing with health, the desirability of monogamy are not challenged." Thus it becomes evident that he thinks that it is important that there should be a re-examination of all the fundamental concepts on which our social system is based, that the experience of the race for centuries has established nothing, not even "the desirability of children glowing with health." Whatever any one may think about the desirability of the modern family or of monogamy, most of us have assumed that children were desirable, for without them the race itself would become extinct. But it seems that Mr. Stearns wishes even the desirability of the existence of man on earth should be subjected to examination to the end that the creature might pass judgment upon the wisdom of the conduct of the creator.

THE essay on "Economics" is written by Professor Walter H. Hamilton, of Amherst College. If the whole book had been written in the same spirit it would have been a valuable contribution to modern thought. Professor Hamilton examines the old economic theories and points out the ways in which they have been modified by the necessities of the industrial development of the last century. He regrets, of course, as all theorists do, that there has not been a conscious adjustment of conditions to some established body of accepted principles. The meeting of each problem as it arose and the solving of it by such wisdom as was available he regards as unscientific. Of course it is unscientific, but when there is wide difference of opinion among experts on what the sound theory is, what else can practical men do. The essay is carefully thought out, informed and suggestive.

Van Wyck Brooks finds our literature without high standards and our men of letters indifferent to the facts of life even to the extent of deliberately ignoring many of them. The man who will sacrifice popularity for the sake of an artistic ideal is almost if not quite unknown. He cites men who have sold their talent for the wherewithal to buy automobiles and places in the country as though that were a peculiarity of American men of letters. Didn't Scott use his talent to pay his debts? But perhaps Mr. Brooks does not regard Scott as a literary artist. He even belittles Mark Twain, one of the finest literary artists of his generation.

TOO FEW of the men who have contributed to the book have demonstrated any ability to dissolve in an analytical crucible the theories and beliefs and institutions which they discuss to make it a genuine contribution to contemporary thought. They are not constructive but destructive within their feeble powers.

As a supplement or possibly a corrective for "Civilization in the United States" it would be well for those of an inquiring mind to read George Santayana's "Character and Opinion in the United States" (Charles Scribner's Sons). They will find there the reflections of a poised and impartial intellect concerned only with the discovery and formulation of the truth.

G. W. D.

SCRAPPED CONVENTIONS

"The Threshold" Shows Post-War Reactions in Small Town

The post-war overthrow of social conventions has made itself felt as much in the small town as in the jazz-infested metropolis, if Evelyn Campbell is to be believed. In "The Threshold" (McBride), Miss Campbell has taken up the tangled skeins of half a dozen characters and endeavors to follow out each thread to its legitimate end—happy or unfortunate, according to accepted formulae.

A young girl, tied to a drab existence in her drab home, facing the sting of genteel poverty, defies convention by going to work in the office of two young lawyers—each of whom, of course, has his interest in her.

Through the life of her other characters, one a hare-brained women typical of today tied down to an unscrupulous business adventurer and the resulting crash in several lives, Miss Campbell takes her novelistic way. Her motif of the danger of crass modernism is stressed, but fails to ring true. This is probably the only fault to be found in this smoothly running little story with its well-drawn and sharply delineated characterization.

New Things by Stevenson

Much new material is to be incorporated into the Vailima edition of the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, which is being published by Charles Scribner's Sons. The new material will include more than one hundred recently discovered poems, as well as about one hundred personal letters never before published. There is a story called "The Waif Woman," which somehow had been overlooked by Stevenson himself. Other "finds" among the author's manuscripts include "The Owl" (a fragment); "The History of Henry Shovel," in fifteen chapters; "When the Devil Was Well," and a number of fragments. There are the first pages of a projected diary of Wellington, a preface to the "Master of Ballantrae," and a delightful mimic "war correspondence" which has a special introduction by Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson's stepson.

Herbert Quick's Novel

Bobbs-Merrill announce for early publication Herbert Quick's new novel, "Vandemark's Folly." In autobiographical form the author tells the story of the settlement of the Middle West, of that tremendous river of emigration which rose in the East and emptied itself into Iowa. It's a long novel, semi-historical, semi-biographical, crowded with incident and peopled with many striking characters.

AT THE FREE LIBRARY

Books added to the Free Library, Thirteenth and Locust streets, during the week ending January 26.

Miscellaneous

American Commission on Conditions in Ireland—"Evidence on Conditions in Ireland," transcribed by Albert Coyle.
Parker, J. M.—"Social Gospel and the New Era."
Harten, G. E.—"Re-education."
Bureau of Educational Experiments—"Health Education."
Carey, W. J.—"Kingdom That Must Be Built."
Crawford, O. G. S.—"Man and His Past."
Eastman, Max—"Sense of Humor."
Frey, Herbert—"Settlement of Wage Disputes."
Ferrero, Guglielmo—"Ruin of the Ancient Civilization and the Triumph of Christianity."
Fischer, M. H.—"Soaps and Proteins."
Foedick, H. E.—"Meaning of Service."
Fray, Joseph—"Repairing Optician."
Higginson, M. T., ed.—"Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson."
Hobbs, W. H.—"Earth Evolution and Its Facial Expression."
Kawakami, K. K.—"Real Japanese Question."
Lovelace, G. M.—"House of Protection."
Lowe, B. E.—"International Protection of Labor."
Morgan, George—"Life of James Monroe."

THE JESUITS

First Complete History of Order in English by a Member

The Rev. Thomas J. Campbell, S. J., has written the first complete history of the Society of Jesus in English by a member of the order. "The Jesuits" (Encyclopedia Press, New York), in its thousand brilliant and fascinating pages, gives a complete narrative and topical account of the order from its foundation by Ignatius Loyola in 1534 to 1921, when the society has 17,250 members. At the beginning of the World War there were 16,000, of whom more than 2000 were in service as soldiers or chaplains and of whom several hundred were killed in action. The author is a distinguished Catholic historian, pulpit orator and educator, whose "Pioneer Priests of North America" and "Pioneer Laymen of North America" are standard in their field.

Father Campbell explains that there is no complete history of the order by a member in existence, the best of the extant works being antiquated owing to the accessibility of new documents and material or out of date owing to their composition half a century or more ago. He further explains that many works are hostile from political motives or highly romantic on account of the imagination of their writers. While he himself writes with a pleasant, and natural partisanship, he is unbiased and rational. For instance, he says, of Cretineau-Joly's history. "He is often a special pleader and even Jesuits find him too eulogistic."

One of the astounding events in history was the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Pope Benedict XIV in 1773, to be resurrected by Pius VII, in 1814, after his release from captivity at Fontainebleau under Napoleon. France, Spain and Italy had been intriguing for years to get the Pope to destroy the Jesuits. The Bourbons found them in their way. Infidel influence at these courts was powerful, as the seventeenth century had become fashionably skeptical and contemptuous of religion, which it denounced as mere priestcraft and superstition. Voltairianism was rampant and claimed all the credit of enlightenment, progress and culture. The Jesuit body was a competitor with its numerous schools, its solicitous cultivation of the humanities, its classical learning, its general culture, its science, its philosophy and its theology, and above all with its influence in all walks of life through the great number of pupils it had educated in its schools. But neither the Protestant, Frederick the Great, nor the Greek Catholic, Catherine, would permit the suppression of the Jesuits in Prussia or Russia.

A Life of Fabre

The life of Jean Henri Fabre, written more than ten years ago by the Abbe Augustin Fabre, is now made available in an English translation by Bernard Miall, published by Dodd, Mead & Co. It tells the story of the distinguished French entomologist with much intimate detail, but the whole narrative is colored by the mind of the ecclesiastic through which it passed. As a piece of literature it leaves much to be desired. Those, however, who wish to know the story of the man who devoted his later years with infinite patience to the study of insects will find all the facts set forth, beginning with the youth spent on a barren farm and ending with the death in a humble cottage a few years after fame came to him.

Mystery in Chicago

A man named Marsh heard a shot at 2 o'clock in the morning in what he had supposed was an unoccupied flat in an apartment house in Sheridan road, Chicago. He rushes to the street for a physician, takes him to the flat, in which they can find no one. Marsh at last discovers a blood spot on the rug in the living room. It had been covered by a chair. This is the way "The Sheridan Road Mystery" (Dodd, Mead & Co.), by Paul and Mabel Thorne, begins. It ends with a solution of the mystery of the shot and of the bloodstain on the rug. More surprising and unexpected things happen in the course of the tale than one is accustomed to find in a detective story. There are counterfeiters and gunmen and Chicago detectives, and a United States Secret Service agent, and a deserted house, and abductions, and disappearances enough to satisfy the most exacting taste.

NEW BOOKS

Fiction

A LITTLE MORE. By W. B. Maxwell. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.
The study of a family in comfortable circumstances which has as its overweening ambition "a little more" money.

JOHANNA H. GODDEN. By Sheila Kaye Smith. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.
A new novel of Sussex by a writer who has made the shire as much her literary domain as Hardy has Wessex, or Phillpotts has Dartmoor.

THE EVERLASTING WHISPER. By Jackson Gregory. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
A splendid outdoors romance set amid the Sierras.

THE GARDEN OF MEMORIES. By Henry Cooper. New York: George H. Doran Company.
A delightful love story of an old house, an old garden, an old love and a past that takes in three young people.

THE LONELY WARRIOR. By Claude Washburn. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.

THE DRAGON IN SHALLOW WATERS. By V. Sackville West. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
The author of "Heritage" has written a new novel on modernity and psychology.

RANGY PETE. By Guy Morton. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co.
A two-gun man who shoots from the hip is the hero of this romance of western thrills.

COOMER ALI. By S. B. H. Hurst. New York: Harper & Bros.
A romance of much action that opens a new field to fiction—the land from Calcutta to Mecca.

SLEEPING FIRES. By Gertrude Atherton. New York: F. A. Stokes Company.
The action covers New York and San Francisco in the seventies. The story is packed with more movement than any of Mrs. Atherton's previous works. It narrates the clash between East and West types.

THE RAGGED EDGE. By Harold MacGrath. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.
Romance and mystery and adventure all blend in this new and characteristic novel by Mr. MacGrath.

General

ADVERTISING FOR TRADE IN LATIN AMERICA. By W. E. Aughinbaugh. New York: Century Company.
Covers comprehensively and practically the field, with many suggestions of value.

WATCHED BY WILD ANIMALS. By Enos A. Mills. New York: Doubleday, Page.
An interesting nature book by a keen observer.

LIFE OF GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE. By Henry Prout. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
The story of a great inventor and his rise from modest beginnings. Contains authoritative accounts, by technical experts, of his numerous inventions.

LESSONS ON TUBERCULOSIS AND CONSUMPTION. By C. E. Atkinson. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.
Dr. Atkinson has written a complete treatise which will be of help to both the practitioner and the sufferer. It will also be of practical value in preventive sanitation.

THE LIFE OF THE WEEVIL. By J. Henri Fabre. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.
Another of the intimate studies by the "Homer of the Insects."

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTIONS OF PSYCHOANALYISIS. By A. A. Brill. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.
A new and authoritative presentation of the Freudian theory by one of Dr. Sigmund Freud's most prominent American disciples. Dr. Brill is a lecturer on the subject at New York University.

DUELS WITH DOOM

Both Hero and Heroine in 'The Bridge' Feel Guilty

A man and a girl, each fighting the engulfing cloud of mental remorse—the man fighting to keep from blaming himself for something for which he knows he is culpable; the girl taking on her shoulders a needless burden of blame. These are the strange central figures of M. L. C. Pickthall's latest novel, "The Bridge." (Century Company).

Hardly companionable characters, it may seem, but Miss Pickthall has drawn about them a story of psychological motif which reaches to the heights of engrossing interest at times.

Alan MacLear, an engineer, scrimps in the construction of a bridge. A crash follows this scamped work and his brother, among others, is killed. Alan refuses to accept even mental blame for the tragedy, although admitting his "scrimping." He finally goes into the barren Great Lakes region to fight with himself. There he meets the girl, a waif of the sea, who is on an island with a half madman, once her brother's admirer, and her brother. Of course, Alan marries the uncouth child of nature. Then when her brother kills the madman in a fit of rage she takes to herself part of the burden of guilt. Thus husband and wife fight their battle, but along different lines. Finally, after several tempestuous scenes and a midwinter rescue, both man and girl change their viewpoint and satisfied romance rests serene with the engineer deciding to devote the rest of his life to bridges in which "scrimping" will have no part.

Harrison on the Philippines

"My Seven Years in the Philippines," by Francis Burton Harrison, ex-Governor General of the islands, is announced for February publication by the Century Company. It is already known that the ex-Governor disagrees flatly with the conclusion of the Wood-Forbes Commission in regard to the capability of his whilom charges for self-government. He is convinced that the Filipinos have already established the stable government required as a condition of independence under the Jones act.

ROMANCE AMUCK

"The Lost Horizon" Also Has a Lot of Literary Style

When G. Colby Borley wrote "The Lost Horizon" (Dodd, Mead & Co.) he came near giving the public just about as quick moving, thrilling, adventurous a tale as the admirer of hair-raising stories could desire. Mr. Borley has plot—plenty of it; picturesqueness of locale—the Canary Islands; unusual but interesting characters—all these in abundance but—and there come the nubbins.

Mr. Borley likes to write. What is more, he seems to revel in it. So much so that just as he has sketched a thrilling situation and, as it were, has his characters suspended in the air, he flops about into a verbose dissertation on some philosophical aspect of something or other and by the time the thread of the story is refound some or much interest is lost.

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The hero joins an ill-fated Central American revolution and when falling, as most revolutionists do at some time or other, runs into a crowd of semi-adventurous friends. Here romance enters, of course, and it is in the culmination of this romance with cross currents of intrigue and thrills, including a few murders, not to mention a couple of bits of piracy, that Mr. Borley fills out his tale.

While profligate in the use (by his characters) of sea dog expletives, the author, like a true Briton, insists that his Englishman stick to "ruddy." Hence, its inbial excesses will not shock Rotten Row or Hyde Park. And South street would recognize most of the other terms used.

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With its personal touches, its whimsical style, its dry humor, and the author's own drawings to illustrate the story, it is sheer delight, and inspiration as well.—Hartford Times.
Does for youth the job which H. G. Wells' "Outline" does for adults. This is the great young people's book of the year, and no home should be without it; for it can be read with relish and tremendous profit by parent as well as child. — John V. A. Weaver, Brooklyn Eagle.
The book is primarily intended for children, to give them a taste for history, an aim it will certainly achieve. But we think that a still more enthusiastic audience will be found among the grown-ups, and that they will make "The Story of Mankind" one of the big successes of the publishing season.—Austin Hay, New York Times.
There is only one word that describes Mr. Van Loon's originality, his subtle wisdom, his love and understanding of children, his reduction of complex material to lucid and dramatic simplicity: and that word is genius. — J. Salwyn Schapiro, The Nation.
For grasp on historic fact, for style and for insight, I prefer plain Mr. Van Loon (without his Ph.D.) to Bishop Bossuet or "Bishop" Wells. He has written a great book, one that will endure.—Charles A. Beard, The New Republic.
"What a jolly way to tell history!"—Henry Hansen, Chicago News.
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