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Book Reviews

Young Heart—George St. Clair—Henry Harrison, New York—\$1.50.

Dr. St. Clair's volume of poems includes a long poem, *A Boy's Heart*, and three shorter poems also in blank verse, called *Three Romantic Poets*, *Gainsborough*, and *Andred del Sarto to Robert Browning*. The first poem is a living human document, the others are new approaches to well known histories and bring out aspects of human nature and relationship worth considering. The *Gainsborough* is both piquant and amusing, though sad enough. Yet interesting though they are, these poems in the nature of things cannot compare with the first poem in interest.

A Boy's Heart is the story of a child who lost his parents early, lived for a while with relatives, was placed by them in an orphanage, had a bad time there, was on the verge of being distorted for life by the treatment he received, and then came under the influence of a new teacher who loved children and had a true concern for them. This teacher understood the boy's childish attachment to her and dealt fairly with it, so that he came to a new and dynamic perception of himself and of the purposes of life. The poem suggests briefly his later years; while unsuccessful in stocks and bonds, the man the child became never let go the vision of life and love his first passion gave him.

A poet deals with life, death, love—love that is sometimes death and sometimes life. But his generation makes it difficult for him to know how best to handle these personal yet universal themes. He starts out with the intention of being honest with life, of finding just what life, death, love mean to him as an individual; but it may happen in the confusion of the age that unwise critics urge him to be "original," to be "different"—and he, not seeing his way ahead in the enormous difficulty of his art, too often drifts into the esoteric, or becomes a smart-aleck, or grows fashionable and dandified. Or he may even confuse poetry with philanthropy and reform.

There can be no doubt that Dr. St. Clair has followed his rightful path—has done well, like the willow by the lake—has kept on letting his own roots feed him. Directness and simplicity carry him through to triumph with a theme many contemporary poets would not dare to touch. And a remarkable thing is this—that although Victorian in his approach to poetry and his technical adherences, he is decidedly the man of today in his ability to *stay real*. It is this quality our generation values above rubies, for which we throw aside so much—possibly too much.

What strikes the reader most is the clear and simple symbolism of the story. The orphanage, its taskmaster Miss Brown, the young teacher Lillian True, and the boy collect in themselves the world, and the existence of every one. I remember hearing that E. A. Robinson once said that the world was a kindergarten, and we were children trying to spell GOD with the wrong blocks. The Lillian True of *Young Heart* is the way out, both to do the strengthening and the caressing, and also the explaining of the reason for the Miss Browns.

HANIEL LONG.

Santa Fe.

The Journey of the Flame—Antonio de Fierro Blanco—Englished by Walter de Steiguer—Houghton Mifflin, 1933—\$3.00.

This is a new departure in our regional expression. Not weighted with purpose, hardly aware of itself as significant—and more telling because of that—it tells the jaunty story of a ten year old boy and his journey from Lower California to San Francisco in 1810. An historical romance, the foreword calls it. But that indicates nothing of its saltiness of proverb, nor of its gay satirical thrust.

For Juanito is hampered by no considerations except those of expediency. Perhaps the red hair bequeathed him by the Irish King who deserted from the great ship with three masts and lived for a year or two in the village of San Jose del Arroyo, gave him an added gusto, and a certain

individual point of view. But his heritage from his mother made him aware of a certain fine racial code which is understood by the blood rather than by the intellect. For that matter, it is often pointed out in pungent and paradoxical sentences. And in any given situation, Juanito is quite clear as to the correct procedure. He even makes it clear to the reader, who, even if it means a complete reversal of habit in moral judgment, agrees at least for the moment.

The picaresque zest of the book does not crowd out a knowledge of Southwestern earth which is as tender as it is intimate. Juanito knows the desert growth and how it can feed the traveller; he knows the ways of mules, and there is tenderness as well as laughter in that also.—Sometimes even profundity! He knows the tales of mission padres, and some homely miracles. He knows the stylistic superiority of Spanish oaths over the English oaths that have been brought ashore by the sailors, and discusses this superiority specifically and at length. He knows some slashing villains—and some unsung heroes too.

Walter de Steiguer handles all this in English prose that is like a whip. In honeyed words there may be sting. In courtesy there may be insult. Laughter turns in a phrase to heartache. In the most naive and credulous moment there may be sudden worldly wisdom and a tongue in the cheek. Always there is the high heart meeting challenge:

“‘Your hinny was born of a cat and sired by a bird,’ said the foreman of arrieros politely to me, and I was compelled to let her be the first to make this dangerous ascent; since one must either accept a compliment or deny its truth.”

Again the same compression and sting: “Turning to his Secretario, the Governor ordered: ‘See that the beam on which he who insulted our King hangs is raised a foot to-day.’ But Don Firmín, speaking with the kindest courtesy to the Secretario, said: ‘Do me the favor to leave this beam as it is. Your Governor is a foot shorter than the official I

have just hanged. What need, therefore, to heighten the beam?" "

The names on the title page of this book are unknown names. But the combination is a good one. So good that the excitement over their work in the next few months should be fun to observe.

FRANCES GILLMOR.

Albuquerque.

The Single Glow—Axton Clark—The Villagra Press, Santa Fe.—\$1.50.

It is easy to pillory verse and hard to praise it. I say Axton Clark is a poet, but to justify such a statement without exaggeration as stultifying to the author as to the critic, is difficult. At his best he is technically impeccable, but as that is surely not enough, what then?

For the most part he employs two of the most common of English poetic forms, the sonnet and pentameter blank verse. Notwithstanding certain experiments with each, his metrical contribution is negligible; he is satisfied to accept inherited measures, concentrating his energies on what he has to put in them.

Nor is he all unwise to rely so boldly on his content. Both as to strength and music it is no little thing. His lyrics sing with lilting assurance, and in such poems as *The Whirlwind* his blank verse has a surging power that will not be denied. These remarks hold true only of his better work, but there is enough of that to lend the book as a whole a rather impressive unity.

At the top of his form, then, he has a really fine feeling for words subtly laced with fire. His range of subjects, however, is not large, nor are they individually imposing. The following two lines are quoted with some reluctance, as they are by no means indicative of the man's capabilities. Yet they express his general attitude so concisely that here they are:

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"But I am briefly glad to share each sun,
The haze, the trains, and then oblivion."

He has a genuine zest for the world of nature, untainted with any wistfulness or sentimentality. Clark is a man and as such delights in natural forces and phenomena, free of false nostalgias. He can look at a bird in whole souled wonder without wishing that he, too, could lay an egg.

Men and women as poetic matter he treats but rarely and then not with too sure a touch. He is superficially personal, and yet strangely impersonal, mentioning but seldom obtruding, his own identity and point of view. At the same time his point of view is clear enough, and a refreshingly healthy one it is. Without vaunting or blatancy he looks at the world and likes it. Neither optimist nor cavalier, he sings of the things that he likes, and does it well.

What more can be said others will have to say. This reviewer's acquaintance with his work is too recent to be productive of any profounder judgments.

JOHN MYERS MYERS.

Albuquerque.

Footnote to Youth—Jose Garcia Villa—Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933—\$2.50.

Here is a book of more than ordinary interest to readers of the *NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY*, the first published book of Jose Garcia Villa. The author of *Footnote to Youth* spoke his literary prologue to American readers in this magazine. For a number of the stories in the present collection, acknowledgments are made to the *QUARTERLY*. Others of the stories have appeared in *Clay*, Mr. Villa's personally edited little magazine, and in *The Frontier*, *Scribner's*, *The Prairie Schooner*, and one or two additional magazines. As one who has known Mr. Villa's work in nearly all of these separated sources sees them gathered together, what is the impression they make?

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The impression is one of wide irregularity in the values of his writing. In the book are six lyrico-dramatic sketches written with New Mexico and the University of New Mexico campus as the setting for the impressions and expressions generating in the author's mind. There is in them too much of the "beating of wings," "purple flowers," and the "rain of music." Like essential youth, Jose Villa is obsessed of love, but it is love that deflected or thwarted drives him helpless before it, that unnerves and unbalances the strength he possesses. The pain would be less incoherent if it were harder fought. Jose Villa makes good his claim to have written sentences "beauteous as a dancer in the dawn," sentences that make him forget for the while girls and boys and himself. And one hopes his art may continue to make him forget especially himself. His love of words, his love of people, brought into controlled flow could raise him into the group of "half-dozen short story writers in America who count," to quote Edward J. O'Brien's introductory comment, but until control masters the expelling of imagery and idea in the artful prose of this young writer, he will continue the slave of his nervous system, a captive within the walls of like and dislike, confidence and distrust.

Nearly all the other tales are of the Phillipines where the author writes with more objective imagination and where he attains true distinction. "The Son of Rizal," "Valse Triste," "Footnote to Youth,"—the title story—are powerfully and symbolically written. The first is of the illusion of a miserable boy that the great and kind Rizal has become his father instead of the cruel and oppressive man his sire by nature; the second is the life long pain summarized in two people from whom young love was snatched; the third is the cycle repeated by children, their children, and their children's children of youth, mating, and parenthood. They augur the future which Mr. Villa may find—a future where his genius dissipates itself less in the

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expansions and contractions of his own heart, before every frost and thaw.

That Villa is a singular artist in English prose no one reading *Footnote to Youth* will fail to recognize. That he sees below the edges of life and penetrates into something of its essence is true of all his stories. That living will pour fundamental truth under the trial and error truth of much of his present writing is artistic prophecy.

T. M. PEARCE.

Albuquerque.

Andrew's Harvest—John Evans—William Morrow and Company, 1933—\$2.00.

The reading of *Andrew's Harvest* has been an agreeable surprise. Its author, the son of Mabel Luhan, stands very much "on his own feet" as regards both the matter and the manner of his writing. Stated baldly, *Andrew's Harvest* is the story of a simple man—the owner of a small ranch in one of the Western states—who has recently lost his wife, and a simple woman—a lunch-counter waitress—who has recently lost both her job and her reputation; and their life together on the tiny ranch where the woman, Julie, has gone to be wet-nurse to Bill Andrew's motherless newborn baby. Just this. The only other characters are minor ones who come in incidentally, and—with the possible exception of the doctor—fail to catch the reader's attention or to leave any impression of vivid individuality. The whole attention is focused upon the man, Bill, and the woman, Julie. Not upon what they do—their doings are merely those of the everyday trivial and rather sordid duties of small-ranch life. It is in what they think that the charm and the individuality of the book lie. Rather in what Bill thinks, for the book is told in the first person, and it is Bill who tells the story. But Bill *feels* what Julie is thinking, and reveals it so that others may feel this, also.

Bill is an introvert—not invert. His world lies not in the realm of things, or of happenings, but in that of wonder-

ing—wondering about his own thoughts and springs of action, about Julie's, and about those of the doctor and of old man Smithers, the latter a character brought in apparently for the sake of comic relief, a jester of sorts, in a tale that is, for all its "happy ending," more tragedy than either comedy or melodrama. To all wonderers, life, with its implications, is tragic, whether the wonderer be a dreaming Czar or Bill, the small-ranch man.

Inarticulate in speech, even with the woman who has gripped first his passion, and afterwards his tenderness as well, Bill reveals himself, both in his bigness, and also in his littleness, to the readers of *Andrew's Harvest*. It is because John Evans has striven to lay bare the struggle of a soul tortured by its own doubts and questionings and regrets—torture which reaches its climax when Bill finds that his own blundering efforts at caring for his baby, covering it more warmly, have resulted in the child's death from suffocation—that his book gives unusual promise of more mature work to come. While not in itself a great book, *Andrew's Harvest* more nearly approaches greatness than any first novel which it has been my fortune to read in some time; one which it is difficult to lay down after starting; something which as regards the average novel—even those not first novels—it is easier to do than to refrain from doing.

J. B. MONTGOMERY-MCGOVERN.

Albuquerque.

Shakespearean Scraps and Other Elizabethan Fragments—Samuel A. Tannenbaum—Columbia University Press, 1933—\$3.75.

On Reading Shakespeare—Logan Pearsall Smith—Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York—\$1.50.

Here are two more books to prove that the interest in Shakespeare is inexhaustible. The first, the *Shakespearean Scraps*, is definitely addressed to scholars, though anyone fond of figuring out detective story problems will find a fascination in Dr. Tannenbaum's application of scientific

methods to the elucidation of the Shakespearean text. The eleven chapters of this scholarly work deal largely with problems raised by the famous Shakespearean forgeries of the notorious English scholar, John Payne Collier, or with attempts at identifying the handwriting in various manuscripts, in this way throwing new light on questions of authorship. For the lover of Shakespeare who is not also a scholar, the most interesting and profitable chapter is Number Six, in which are suggested various emendations for disputed or disputable passages. In my own opinion, Dr. Tannenbaum makes out a most excellent case for each of his suggested emendations.

Logan Pearsall Smith's *On Reading Shakespeare* does not exhibit the exhaustive scholarship of the first book, although there is no doubt that Mr. Smith has read widely in the field of Shakespearean research, nor that he has made the best of such scholarship his own. The first book is one for specialists, mostly; the second may be read and enjoyed by everybody. In fact, I know of no other book on the subject which offers such an excellent introduction to the reading and study of Shakespeare. The very titles of the chapters are an invitation to the reader to sit down at the feast: I—On Not Reading Shakespeare; II—The Great Adventure; III—The Great Reward, Poetry; IV—The Great Reward: Character; and so on. Is it not a challenge? The author conveys to his reader much of the fine gusto, the even fierce delight, with which he himself approaches the reading of Shakespeare, in a bold, intensely personal, and intimate style. For instance, speaking of Shakespeare's great gift of pathos, he writes thus: (Quoting from *King John*).

Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast
And with the half-blown rose.

("Bother that 'Half-blown' rose! Its beauty blurs my eyes, and I can hardly go on quoting.")

There is one point, however, on which I should differ

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with Mr. Smith, and that is upon his revival of the Lamb-Hazlitt contention that Shakespeare's plays are not suited for the stage. To me this is the rankest heresy. During the past three years, I have produced here in Albuquerque three plays of Shakespeare's, on an outdoor stage, with as close an approximation as possible to the conditions of the Elizabethan stage, and, with amateur actors. They were unreservedly enjoyed by our audiences, many of whom told me that they had, for the first time, appreciated the wit, humor, beauty, and power of these comedies.

But this is a minor point of difference. In everything else he says, Mr. Smith is as sound and as piquant as a fresh nut. And stimulating! And suggestive! Next to reading Shakespeare himself, I know of no greater delight than reading beautifully phrased appreciations of him. This book goes in my library with Robert Ingersoll's eloquent oration on Shakespeare and with John Masefield's profoundly moving appraisal of the plays. Get it if you want to have a good time!

GEORGE ST. CLAIR.

Albuquerque.

New Mexico History and Civics—Lansing B. Bloom and Thomas C. Donnelly—University Press, Albuquerque, 1933—\$2.50.

New Mexico History and Civics, by Lansing B. Bloom and Thomas C. Donnelly has been written to provide a textbook in the subject on the secondary school level. As such, it appears in response to a felt need, and will certainly be welcome if it fills this need satisfactorily. Professor Bloom is responsible for the history section; Dr. Donnelly, for the civics. It will be convenient to review these separately.

Professor Bloom should be well qualified to write a history of our State. He was for many years curator of the Historical Museum at Santa Fe and he has carried on considerable research in the archives at Seville and Mexico City. His knowledge of the sources is therefore extensive, and it may be said at once that a good feature of his book is

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that he has indicated to his readers, both in the text and in the bibliographies appended to each chapter, what are the foundations on which our historical knowledge rests.

It is stated in the preface that the history "is presented as an *interpretation* rather than as a complete and detailed *narrative*." Undoubtedly a historian's interpretation may be a most valuable feature of his work; nevertheless, in a textbook it would seem desirable to have a reasonably complete narrative. The book might be improved by including more information concerning such outstanding episodes as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 (including the retreat south and the founding of El Paso) and the Confederate invasion under Baylor. As it is, it will be necessary for the teacher to find supplementary reading material to cover the narrative part of the history adequately.

In the field of interpretation Professor Bloom is at his best in pointing out the effects of the impact of the various cultures—Indian, Spanish, French, Anglo-American—on each other and their mingling in the multicolored life of the Southwest. It is a further virtue of his work that he has incorporated into it some of the results of recent research. This is manifest in the chapters dealing with the early Pueblo Indians, with the 17th century history, and with Franco-Spanish relations on the frontier. His treatment of the American period is rather disappointing, because it ignores almost entirely the cultural and economic development of the State.

In the section devoted to civics, Dr. Donnelly has aimed "not only to present to the student a clear picture of the organization and functioning of his own state government, but also to compare and contrast, here and there throughout the text, New Mexican practices with those found in other states." The reviewer is entirely in sympathy with this general method of approach. However, the language will not be self-explanatory without a background knowledge of political science and economics, and it will be necessary for

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the teacher to supply this knowledge for the benefit of the ordinary high school student. Chapter XVIII on "State Administration" is noteworthy for an able explanation of the great modern increase in the number and variety of governmental functions. The author possesses the courage of his convictions and sometimes states his own opinion on controversial issues, as in the chapters dealing with the educational system and taxation.

Like all first editions, the volume contains a certain quota of typographical errors. In a table on page 367, the word "Federal" is repeated twice, when evidently in one case it should be "State." On page 164 occurs "Equalité" instead of "Egalité." On the whole, however, the proof-reading has been well done. The illustrations are generally good and some useful maps are included; but it would be an improvement to add to the number of the latter. A commendable feature is the glossary of difficult English words and foreign terms. There is also a good index.

Taken as a whole, *New Mexico History and Civics* is a valuable and timely contribution to our school textbook literature.

P. M. BALDWIN.

State College, N. M.

America in the Southwest—Thomas M. Pearce and Telfair Hendon—University Press, Albuquerque, 1933—\$3.00.

America in the Southwest: an anthology, the voices of a people singing. Singing, not in the measured cadence of verse but in the varied individualism of prose. Singing of the Southwest, of its blue distances, its ancient races, its conquistadores and frailes. Telling of the intimacies of its hidden streams deep in fern and cardinal flower; its homely scent of cedar smoke rising from under the backyard wash tub; its jangle of spur, surprising on a small town pavement; its consumptive cough and realtor's boom; its pageantry and its homeliness.

Thomas M. Pearce and Telfair Hendon, the compilers, have captured for us in this Southwestern anthology the echoes of the many-voiced New Mexico. They give us the land that since the birth of history in the western hemisphere has never been young, but in its daily liveableness can never grow old. It is the land of mañana only because its days are ever brighter with the beauty of changing mountain and desert scene, more vital with crystal air and golden sunshine.

The anthology is planned with a definiteness which makes for order out of the vastness of material which must always present difficulties in assembling a work of this type. The compilers answer the three great questions, what, where, and who. And they answer these questions with a wealth of historical, geographical and biographical information chosen for accuracy, color, and style.

The question "what" is most completely answered. This section, as Pearce and Hendon explain in the introduction, is devoted to "critical articles, both popular and scholarly, intended to provoke thought upon the great social, political, and economic questions in an area as extensive as many European states." The first two articles in the section, "Humanizing of a Race" from Edgar L. Hewett's "Ancient Life in the American Southwest," and "The Diggings" by Hartley Burr Alexander, are admirably chosen because they open the reader's mind immediately to the splendid heritage of esthetic, ethical and social culture given New Mexico by the Indian. Other selections follow, ranging from a discussion of "Mexicans and New Mexico" by Mary Austin to an interpretation of the southwestern cowboy, a discussion of Spanish colonial arts, various customs of the country, and a group of short articles by well-known southwestern writers.

The second question "where" is answered by several charming descriptions of New Mexico's scenery, and that section is aptly headed "Touch of Earth."

"Who" in New Mexico includes a collection of stories, anecdotes, and articles, chosen for the purpose of giving the reader a glimpse into the inner life of the state and its people, people who defy the mixing pot, who are as varied as the changing scenes of mesa and mountain. This section affords, perhaps, the most entertaining reading, for these are the people of romantic yesterday, of the western movies, these are the people of today, who in spite of machines and the levelling processes typified by Montgomery Ward catalogues are still, thank God for it, *individuals*.

This book was no doubt designed primarily for use by students of literature, and is especially suited for use in schools of the Southwest, where an understanding of the state, its culture, its problems, is essential for young people who expect to live and prosper here. But it is also a book which makes splendid reading for all of us. And for those who love New Mexico, who wish to drain every drop of joy from our cup of life here, it is indispensable.

MARGARET PAGE HOOD.

Las Cruces.