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Book Reviews

Walt Whitman and the Springs of Courage—Haniel Long—Writers' Editions, Rydal Press, Santa Fe.—\$2.50.

How does one review a book about Walt Whitman? Should one need to urge the reading of a book about Whitman? Whitman stands so tall on the literary horizon of America! Anyone sailing into the harbor of American literature should see Whitman first, holding aloft the flaming torch of humanity, insisting upon the first vitality of fellowship, simplicity, and decent regard among men. Whatever is said about Whitman is important and yet there will be all degrees of effectiveness with which the things are said.

Haniel Long's book on Whitman projects the creed of the great American poet with unusual insight. Mr. Long has not tried to write a book of direct exposition of Whitman's ideas; nor has he tried to write a book of direct biography. Instead, he has chosen the leading influences upon Whitman from life or letters and discusses them as they are reflected in his work. The method is highly eclectic, but the result is a series of essays of distinguished style which confirm the power and originality of Walt as a thinker and in one respect only challenge the adequacy of his views.

From Whitman's experimenting with phrenology we get one of those curious terms which are so important in his later distinctions about man's nature. In describing Robert Burns in phrenological terms, Whitman calls him "proud-spirited, amative, alimentative, convivial, young . . . man of the decent-born middle classes." "Amative, alimentative," especially "amative" reappear later when the poet's emphasis is upon exercising all the sensory organs of man's nature. "Amativeness" and "adhesiveness" are the terms descriptive of love in the sex sense and love in the platonic sense used by Whitman in a manuscript note to his poem *Children of Adam*. He affirms the procreative tie between

the sexes but the psychological rewards of friendship draw from him such a rhapsody as one would find only in the Renaissance or in Greek thought where the cult of male companionship contributed to a high period of Greek letters though it seems to have been an element toward decadence in society. Whitman's doctrine of "adhesiveness" is not decadent; without the economic theory, it has the warmth of the communist brotherhood, the "camraderie" of spiritual democracy.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the
rivers of America, and along the shore of the great
lakes, and all over the prairies;

I will make inseparable cities, with their arms about each
other's necks;
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.

(From "A Song" in *Leaves of Grass*.)

Aside from Emerson, the New England literary group rejected Whitman, and in turn he made cause with his "barbaric yawp" against the circle of elite culture. He asserts that he "would leave a select soiree of elegant people 'any time' to go with tumultuous men and roughs." Matthew Arnold, the English Brahmin, was anathema to him. And one is refreshed to hear it! For what is the veneer recognized as cultivation, Whitman substitutes the stronger virtues of folk life with its warm pulse in the every-day joys and sorrows of simple people. Certainly, there, he was with the heart of America, the great stream of common life, the mighty currents on which an upper few ride with leisure and comfort. From this mass life came most of the boys who lay on hospital cots during the war in the wards where Walt visited. It was toward this mass life that he felt that love which he defines as "healthy, cheerful feeling of kindness and good-will, and affectionate tenderness, a warm-heartedness, the germs of which are plentifully sown by God in each human breast."

Haniel Long speaks of the "humble and honest feeling for life" which saves one from "despair or something worse." It is this spring of courage that Whitman transfers to his interpreter and to the interpreter's reader. The mind that looks on the lunacy of the modern world, still unregenerate from the brutal lust of states seeking to destroy each other, of instruments of scientific precision in dealing death, of the impotence of "adhesiveness" among men to get anywhere with the war lords, can be grateful for a boost to courage and for such spirits as Whitman's and Haniel Long's.

T. M. PEARCE.

University, Albuquerque.

Women of the Wilderness—Margaret Bell—E. P. Dutton Company, 1938—\$3.50.

This is a story of the pioneer women of America and how, in them, the long pent-up forces of woman came to self-expression.

The separateness of her physical experience breeds an intellectual and spiritual separateness that man has long been loath to acknowledge and which could not but develop a penetration and a logic of her own. Her logic is a direct relation of cause and effect on the demands of her own sex. She is impatient of theories designed to cover universal situations.

Anne Hutchinson realized that loyalty and intolerance had forced the pioneers to seek new homes, and when she saw these same qualities develop in the men who had fled to escape them, her essentially logical mind rebelled and refused to accept the situation. Her trial is drama of the purest water. Governor Winthrop has accused her of holding meetings for the women of the colony that were "prejudicial to the state." She calmly said, "Sir, I do not believe that to be so!" But if, as he declares, he must restrain her, "If you have a rule for it from God's word, you may."

Never had a woman stood up in this fashion to vested authority. And authority, unable to deal with the unpre-

cedented situation, can not destroy but only banish that rebellious and courageous spirit. Again and again it comes to life. Finally, the men recognize and acknowledge the growing power of women. One Goodman Greene advised that wives be not too much restrained or "all the women in the country will cry out against you."

We should have liked to read more of that other Anne, "the Tenth Muse," Anne Bradstreet, the first American poet who numbers among her descendants such men as Wendell Phillips, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the father of New England Unitarianism, William Ellery Channing.

Margaret Bell in these vivid portraits makes us realize the eternal kinship between these pioneer women and those women of today who are still pioneering for the improvement of their own sex.

MIRIAM SAGE.

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Cactus Forest—Zephine Humphrey—E. P. Dutton and Company, 1938
—\$2.50.

We are always glad when people come out and find the Southwest interesting enough to write about. That doesn't surprise us, and we like visitors and we like to know what they think about us. But there have been too many books about the Southwest, by visitors (how does one define a visitor? three weeks, three months—Willa Cather stayed a summer) which pretended to be profound or rapturous or debunking, that were actually only ill-informed, or prejudiced to begin with. Here is a book, casual in its attitude, clever in its style, and intuitive in its judgment. Zephine Humphrey hits it off about the Southwest; she gets things right. This is the second of her western travel books which I have seen. The other was called *Green Mountains to Sierras*, and covered, in part, the same territory. It seemed less thoughtful, less deliberate, more travelog and jotty. Her books on New England are probably the best things she's done, since there, as in parts of *Cactus Forest*, she can create

mood of place, mood and understanding of the people in a place.

"Where does the West begin?" asks Mrs. Humphrey and answers: When your restaurant coffee cups begin to be refilled without extra charge; when the accommodations for men and women begin to be announced, even advertised, sometimes with humor, instead of concealed behind a nameless door as in New England; when the attendants at gas stations really welcome you and have the windshield cleaned before they ask about oil or gas; when you see women in shops or movies with their heads a mass of curling pins; when you hear meadow larks, almost universally; when you find the salad served at the start of the meal instead of after the meat course; when you stay in Tourist Camps instead of Tourist Homes; when you become aware as you travel that time isn't a uniform system but that your own movement, and the earth's movement, and your clock's movement all need frequent coordination.

It is at Cactus Forest Ranch in Arizona that these two easterners—Mrs. Humphrey and her husband, Christopher—settled down to the solitude of the Arizona desert. The author's descriptions of sunsets and sun-ups, of moonlit nights, of desert birds and plants, are chatty and entertaining. She finds Southwest folk free of sentimentality, but friendly and emotional in a "clear-cut, austere, straightforward way." The Mexican young people were handsome, but the race seemed to age prematurely, yet with character and dignity. Arizona did not understand either its Indian or Mexican populations so well as New Mexico. The Mexicans are indifferent to this attitude, but the Indians do not accept the neglect, and there is bitterness in their spirits.

Generous though Mrs. Humphrey is to the Southwest and its charm, she has a reservation or two. It is a little hypocritical in advertising bureaus and chambers of commerce never to mention the phenomenon of wind in describing the weather. For an amusing account of a Southwestern dust storm read her chapter on "Arizona Weather."

She taxes the desert with demanding too much of one's life; jealous of yielding to its fascination, she guards the interests of civilization and wants to stay loyal to them. One of these interests is books, and Arizona was woefully weak in libraries in comparison to New England. An atrocious slip in taste which occurred in a church bulletin which printed the Easter Allelulias beside beauty parlor advice pointed to something crude in Western newness which New England found hard to overlook. Rentals were high both at dude ranches and hotels, and Mrs. Humphrey says she detects a tendency which she notes too in Vermont, to jack up prices to the levels of only the rich and let the simple people take the consequences.

As a New Mexican, I read the book with interest. Mrs. Humphrey has never tried to "get" Santa Fe, though in her *Green Mountains to Sierras*, she has words descriptive of Taos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque; but the attempt is not so serious as her attempt at Arizona. Certainly she would not miss books in Santa Fe; it would be cheaper to live in any of the New Mexico towns than in Arizona; the weather would be just as amusing, but a little more temperate, and as for taste, well, "non disputandum."

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