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The American Novel—Carl Van Doren—The Macmillan Company,
New York, 1940—\$3.00.

Carl Van Doren, the well-known author of the chapters on fiction in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, has for many years been the leading authority on the American novel. For some time his knowledge of American fiction has been available in two distinct volumes; but now, in the revised edition of *The American Novel*, Mr. Van Doren has for the first time brought the whole story of American fiction within the covers of a single book.

It is indeed fortunate that the first complete account of the American novel is written by a man of discernment, for the extraordinary growth of prose fiction in recent years has tended to obscure the main outline of its national development. The author performs yeoman service both for the general reader and for the specialist. He clears away the underbrush which has almost obliterated the high road leading to the chief literary monuments of our past, and blazes a distinct trail through the byways and more remote areas of our letters.

In the development of the American novel James Fenimore Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne are set forth as the most important figures. Irving in the sketch and Poe in the short story are hailed for their contribution to technique. Throughout the book the amount of discussion given to the works of each author is almost directly proportionate to the estimate which Mr. Van Doren makes of the artistic significance of each in American prose. Henry James leads the list with twenty-seven pages. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Mark Twain tie for a close second with twenty-six. James Fenimore Cooper follows with twenty-two. The three greatest American novels are unmistakably proclaimed: *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby Dick*, and *Huckleberry Finn*.

Mr. Van Doren is perhaps a little too generous to Cabell, who in the reviewer's opinion suffers from his artificial mythology, over-luxuriant rhetoric, and an atmosphere that is sexually unwholesome. And our historian errs in the other direction in his estimate of *The Last Puritan*, which he dismisses merely as the rounding out and completion of George Santayana's philosophical works. Yet in the main, Mr. Van Doren's judgment is as sound as his interpretations are illuminating.

This revised and enlarged edition of *The American Novel*, ending with *The Grapes of Wrath*, clarifies the relationships and groupings of American writers of fiction. It corrects certain misconceptions about authors, books, and characters. Many of Mr. Van Doren's observations and pronouncements are as creative and as gratifying to the intellect and the senses as are some of the great passages that he quotes. No other writer on American literature has his fineness of perception, accuracy of discrimination, or subtlety of style; and though a great history of American literature as a whole is yet to be written, Mr. Van Doren has given us the definitive story of one of its most important divisions.

DANE FARNSWORTH SMITH

University of New Mexico
Albuquerque

Historian and Scientist—Gaetano Salvemini—Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1939—\$1.75.

Of great interest to most historians is an analysis of the many factors and problems that confront them. So it is with considerable pleasure that we turn to this most delightful volume by the eminent exiled Italian historian, Gaetano Salvemini.

The text is four lectures delivered at the University of Chicago, and as the author says, "The printed form preserves the informal and colloquial style." These lectures, a summing up of experiences in historical research, reflect a

sage, humorous, tolerant, and keenly analytical mind. At the outset the definitions of terms clearly expounded place the historians as scientists who endeavor to "reconstruct past events" from the "remnants" and traces left in human memory. On the other hand the social scientists devote attention to "detecting uniformities and deducting laws" for human behavior. "Intellectual hybrids" are the crossbreeds springing from historical and other activities; the result is historical fiction, literary biographies, and propaganda of various kinds. The historian strives to ascertain the facts, and through these to lay down a background for the conditions under which we live. He works with the hope that laws "to which social phenomena conform will be discovered."

Working with "fragments of the past" often poorly preserved and records that have all the inaccuracies of the human record, the historian and social scientist must recognize his own biases, must be aware of the problem of selection of materials, must have imagination. With these limitations he may project his hypotheses and draw his conclusions, which of necessity change with the changing events of the centuries.

A delightful humanness is apparent throughout the essay. When Mr. Salvemini speaks of philosophers of our day he says, "I understand not one single thing," and again he refers to Benedetto Croce as "a contemporary philosopher whom I sometimes manage to understand."

Humor also is ever present. It may be a remark relating to the confusion of terms and the need for definition, which he says is like "the case of the lady librarian who was puzzled whether to catalog a book on the Immaculate Conception under theology or embryology." Again he states, "Nobody would expect Shakespeare to produce Hamlet's birth certificate, or would investigate exactly how rotten was the state of Denmark in Hamlet's day."

The essay evidences sagacity and real tolerance which are the results, perhaps, of the author's bitter experiences in

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his exile from his homeland. He concludes "that our civilization will break down if the school fails to teach the incoming generation that there are some things that are not done." This may, perchance, explain a part of Europe's present disaster.

DOROTHY WOODWARD

University of New Mexico
Albuquerque

Elizabethan and Jacobean Playwrights—Henry W. Wells—Columbia University Press, New York, 1939—\$2.75.

Seventy-five years of the English theatre are surveyed in this volume and the plays of thirty-three dramatists with references to the interaction of the times upon the theatre and the theatre upon the times. Professor Wells says that he does not pretend to offer "a radically new interpretation of the entire movement," but does attempt a "fresh picture." This new viewpoint is chiefly that of the changed temper of the Elizabethan years as opposed to the Jacobean (the reign of the first James), a change the author traces in the audiences to which the stage made its appeal. The playhouse in Shakespeare's time was one of the last broadly democratic expressions of art England was to know. It was built on the wide appeal to the common people of the miracle and morality plays. Court and college playwrights brought outlines of form and taste, but they accepted in large the spectacle, clowning, ribaldry, and solemn sententiousness which fed popular taste. The Cavalier theatre patronized by the aristocratic society of Jacobean London shut out this motley of the Elizabethan world, and turned to the wit, grace, and absurdity of its own upper class society. Fashionable Hyde Park is the setting for one of Shirley's best comedies, and conversational comedies in London drawing rooms are provided by Middleton, Fletcher, and Heywood. Ben Jonson's sardonic genius bridges the two eras, carrying in all his vehicles, from *Everyman in His Humor* (1596) to *The Mag-*

netic Lady, or Humors Reconciled (1632), a conception of the theatre as a social agency that no other dramatist felt.

Dr. Wells has an amazing range of information about the plays of this fecund period in stage history. There is a challenging statement on every page, and frequently a debatable one. Packed with so much information and so much opinion, the book cannot fail to be valuable to student and instructor alike both for details on a wide list of plays and for interpretations based upon the letter without ignoring the spirit of those times.

A Treatise of Melancholie—T. Bright. Reproduced from the 1586 edition, with an introduction by Hardin Craig. Published for the Facsimile Text Society. Columbia University Press, New York, 1940—\$2.60.

This famous little book has been familiar to many through the well-written interpretation given it by G. B. Harrison's "Essay on Elizabethan Melancholy," published in 1929 with the reprinting of Nicholas Breton's *Melancholike Humours*. Now in the first modern printing, a much wider group of students will find available at first hand the manual which Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Marston, Nashe, and practically all literate Elizabethans consulted as an explanation of "that tired feeling" and how to account for the strange behavior of their friends.

When one considers the quack nostrums to which vast audiences are exposed today through visual and sound channels, an earnest little inquiry like Dr. Bright's with its concern for soul and body seems particularly commendable. Striving to cure a friend of "heaviness and uncomfortable plaints," Timothy Bright discusses the nature of melancholy in forty-one chapters, proceeding from the meaning and causes of the word, to its bearing on the harmonies within the body as the instrument of the soul. One learns how affections are altered by the moist and cold qualities of a black substance in the blood, and how kindness, courtesy, and grace from others can do most to ameliorate this distemper.

of melancholy. Diet, of course, is a fundamental concern of Dr. Bright, and to all appearance in his Chapter VI, he removed pretty carefully almost everything choice from the Elizabethan larder, such as pork, beef, mutton (ram), goat, venison, boar's flesh; water fowl, oysters, crayfish, crab, lobster; milk and things made from it; eggs, red wine and "whatsoever liquor, beare, ale or cider, is not cleere, and well fined: as also if it be tart and sower." There is nothing to be said for Robert Greene, who in 1591 died of a surfeit of Rhenish wine and red herring. Six years before, he had been warned against this very combination as capable of the most serious disturbances. In fact, every Elizabethan could have been, as Ben Jonson boasted of himself, "a creature of most divine temper . . . in whom the humors are peaceably met" if only he had allowed Dr. Bright to be his guide.

There is an interesting chapter in which the reader learns why when weeping he puts his finger in his eye, and another chapter in which people addicted to blushing and bashfulness discover the seat of the trouble to be melancholy.

Christopher Marlowe seems to have read Chapter 19 in order to furnish Tamburlaine with the senses of the soul which will glut themselves after his body's death, and for Jacques as well as Hamlet Shakespeare may have found prescription in Dr. Bright.

Congratulations to the Facsimile Text Society for continuing to diminish the list of unavailable source materials in English literature, and thanks to the editor, Professor Hardin Craig, for his brief but learned critical introduction.

T. M. PEARCE

University of New Mexico
Albuquerque

Hardy of Wessex—Carl J. Weber—Columbia University Press—New York, 1940—\$3.00.

It is proper that the centennial of Thomas Hardy's birth should re-direct attention to his work. *The Southern Review* devotes an entire issue (Summer, 1940) to Hardy.

Carl J. Weber's study, although not essentially a critical work, relates Hardy's personal life to his career as writer and puts under one cover much valuable material for further study of the English novelist and poet. Professor Weber re-emphasizes two facts about Hardy that cannot be too often repeated. The first is that Hardy's primary love was poetry; consequently, his abandonment of the novel after the harsh reception given *Jude the Obscure* in the closing years of the nineteenth century was not so much the petulant withdrawal it has often been said to be. A second fact which Mr. Weber properly stresses is that Hardy's profound pessimism was accompanied by a distinctly melioristic philosophy, which kept Hardy largely free of any sickly self-pity, although he was too good an artist and too blunt and direct a man to relax in his writings from any of the rigors of his pessimism.

Hardy perhaps does not deserve some of the encomiums heaped upon him by such a critic as Professor William Lyon Phelps. Neither in lyrical power, imaginative sympathy, nor breadth of interest was Hardy a Shakespeare of anything. Nevertheless, Hardy's novels are infinitely more than the melodrama, coincidence, and rhetoric that any sophomore can certainly detect in them. Virginia Woolf's complaint that Hardy sometimes wrote atrociously, and Edwin Muir's charge that his plots often lack the rounded contours of life are justifiable criticisms, but no more damning in the long run perhaps than the Classicists' charge that Shakespeare was full of conceits. Hardy was consistent in his view of life, with the terrible consistency of his intuitions. Despite the ironic banter of Hardy himself about how "the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had finished his sport with Tess," there is, implicit in the structure of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and other Hardy novels, a terrifying justice and balance. Hardy will perhaps live even longer as a poet of painstaking craftsmanship who achieved through his art some of that detachment from

personal feeling which he and many contemporaries thought destiny or fate had achieved in its attitude toward mortals.

Professor Weber's well-documented study sets the record straight on many facts about Hardy, and in its appendices indicates where further profitable study may be pursued. One wishes sometimes that Mr. Weber were less interested in tracking down the specific individuals who sat for their portraits in the novels, and were more interested in studying the springs of creation. But at least the author sticks to what he can prove and attempts nothing that he does not do well.

DUDLEY WYNN

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Albuquerque*

Lullaby—For a Distraught Adult

By HAROLD W. HAWK

Sleep, tired eyes and tired heart I love,
Sleep and rest!

Escape the pain that is not thine alone—

Forget the long day's irritation and the night's unending
drag—

Thou wert born for a better world than this—or worse!

Sleep, tired eyes and tired heart,

Sleep and rest.

Sleep, oh, heavy sleepless eyes and tortured, restless mind
I love,

Sleep and rest!

Be sure that once asleep as thou wouldst be

There'll be no more waking with a cry—

There'll be no waking through a timeless time—

Sleep, oh, weary burned-out eyes and emptied heart,

Sleep and rest!