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The Saturday Review

TEN CENTS A COPY

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JULY 24, 1926

NUMBER 52

I Know a Certain Woman

By CHARLES DIVINE

I KNOW a certain woman goes
 Immaculate, immune
 To breath of Ilac, scent of rose,
 To stars or moon or any tune
 Invading her repose;
 I know a certain woman goes
 So arrogantly in her clothes.
 Cold? No coldness in her eye.
 Only her step goes passing by
 Disdainful as the rain.
 I think she does not dare to sigh
 For sighing is a kind of pain,
 And so she goes, a woman goes,
 Immaculate, immune,
 Surrendered to no tune,
 Aware, I think, if once she sang
 It could not be for long
 With heartbreak in her song.



History of Human Progress*

By ELLSWORTH HUNTINGTON

THE number of people who are interested in the evolution of civilization seems to be increasing. This is fortunate, for never before, so far as we are aware, has human culture changed so rapidly and hence been so deeply in need of wise helmsmen. Such helmsmen must be able to foretell at least a little of the future by reason of their knowledge of the past. This is the more essential because now, as never before, we see an almost incredibly rapid change in the very fabric of human nature. Not only are stupendous cultural changes taking place, but the innate biological character of the human race is probably changing faster than ever before in all history. During no other century have man's mode of life, occupations, places of residence, marital relationships, rates of reproduction and death, and his attitude toward women, children, migration, and racial mixture suffered any such complete revolution as has occurred during the last three or four generations. The world is evidently moving at a very rapid rate. The only way to find where we are going is to discover the truth about the past and use that as the basis for inferences as to the future. Hence history is

DEAR MR. BARR -
 THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME SEE THE REVIEW -
 I'VE RE-READ IT MORE THAN ONCE, AND I FEEL ITS A VERY PERCEPTIVE ANALYSIS - ESPECIALLY FOR THE DIM 20'S.
 I, too, in his classes, and in my brief TEACHING period there, felt the over-emphasis of 'plastic values' to the

impressed by the opinions of those we loved and respected. In the school, alas, we more often approached reading as a mere task. But in either

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This

Week

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exclusion of human, personal, and social values.
I don't think it will come to a court case. He'll bluster and storm. He didn't do anything about the Phila Museum's reproduction of "Joy of Life" in their Bulletin, except threaten.
If he sues, you'll win, and thereby help end this dog-in-the-manger attitude -
A.L.C

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VOLUME II

P.S -
 And besides, how absurd to be
 angry with 1926 comments -
 deserved or undeserved.
 it would be interesting to
 compare changes in his 1926
 edition and the most recent one -
 and if a new one is to come out,
 watch the space assigned
 to Paul Klee -

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Reader's Progress

RECENTLY, in desultory talk with a certain publisher, we fell to analyzing the development of the average reader, and, incidentally of ourselves as lovers of good books. We reduced the progress of a vital interest in contemporary literature to three chief stages. Harking back to our own earliest experiences with books, we recalled the libraries of respective homes in which a majority of the great books of the ages were ranked before the young reader, the young and active reader who had many other interests at the time connected with school, playground, and athletic field—though school, also, was obviously a place of books.

The riches of literature lay all around us. In the home, the great writers of the past were often talked about, in the school they were, to a certain extent, crammed down our throats. We absorbed the more original comments concerning them in the home, the more stereotyped in the school. But through our early days most of the great names became familiar to us. Yet we read in two fashions.

We went to the books in the home somewhat impressed by the opinions of those we loved and respected. In the school, alas, we more often approached reading as a mere task. But in either case we judged books by one touchstone alone. There were books in which we immediately became absorbed. There were books which, after a few pages, unless as a prescribed school task, we should never—we thought—seek out again. We were quite open to conviction. But we demanded that a story immediately obliterate the outside world for us, that it transport us to another region. We had our own quaintly limited predilections, and a minimum of patience.

Consequently our reading was heterogeneous in the extreme. Possessing average, healthy minds, we took to nickel libraries as easily as to Dickens. We might read a masterpiece and find it enthralling, and, the next day, find equally enthralling some preposterous, cheap story of no possible literary value. We had not yet enough data to establish any standard of comparison.

So the first stage. The second followed from our late 'teens onward. With many readers, the second stage persists through most of their lives. It is a stage in which certain experiences of actual life have been garnered, certain disillusionments encountered, certain theories of life evolved. The reader then seeks in the creative writing he meets with, a mirror of his developing self. No longer does he merely desire a narrative that shall

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This Week



Two Books on War. Reviewed by
Elbridge Colby.

Books on Soviet Russia. Reviewed
by *Graham R. Taylor.*

"The Art in Painting." Reviewed
by *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.* h. 948

Books on Hunting. Reviewed by
Alfred Stoddart.

"Poetic Values." Reviewed by
Frank Luther Mott.

"Pediatrics of the Past." Reviewed
by *Edward C. Streeter, M.D.*

"The Black Hunter." Reviewed by
Allan Nevins.

"Sounding Brass." Reviewed by
Grace Frank.

Next Week, or Later

Henry Ford in This World. By
Rexford Guy Tugwell.

spiritual and mental milestones have been left behind, memory asserts a larger store of experience, more books have been assimilated and literature has

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THE number of people who are interested in the evolution of civilization seems to be increasing. This is fortunate, for never before, so far as we are aware, has human culture changed so rapidly and hence been so deeply in need of wise helmsmen. Such helmsmen must be able to foretell at least a little of the future by reason of their knowledge of the past. This is the more essential because now, as never before, we see an almost incredibly rapid change in the very fabric of human nature. Not only are stupendous cultural changes taking place, but the innate biological character of the human race is probably changing faster than ever before in all history. During no other century have man's mode of life, occupations, places of residence, marital relationships, rates of reproduction and death, and his attitude toward women, children, migration, and racial mixture suffered any such complete revolution as has occurred during the last three or four generations. The world is evidently moving at a very rapid rate. The only way to find where we are going is to discover the truth about the past and use that as the basis for inferences as to the future. Hence history is assuming a new importance. That is one reason why our waste baskets overflow with documents telling us how much we miss if we fail to buy the best, the raciest, the fullest, the most authentic, the cheapest, or the latest interpretation of man. For the same reason we are constantly assured that this interpretation must begin with the earliest amoeba and end only with the superman who may arise tomorrow.

Doubtless this is all true, but who is to be our guide? "The historian, of course," is the first answer. But what if the historian is interested primarily in old documents and dates, and exults over the finding of a new letter from some obscure prime minister more than over a unique discovery as to how primitive man passed from the age of Stone to that of Copper and Iron? Shall we turn to the archaeologist? But perhaps he is so enraptured at finding new markings on old potsherds or new gilding on old tombs that he cares little for the effect of religion in altering the position of women? Perhaps the student of comparative religions will give us a better analysis, but he knows nothing about economics. The economist in turn knows little about ethnology; the ethnologist still less about politics, the student of politics has no real conception of geography, and the geographer is not trained in the critical methods of historical analysis. Thus we complete a circle,

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mental about their foes"—against the pathetic individuals, themselves not responsible for the old régime, whose lives have been shattered. But in all the ferment one finds healthy signs, the stirring of new and vigorous life. What it all leads to Mr. Hindus does not venture to predict. He cannot, however, see the peasant, "a tight fist, self-centered individualist," accepting "a communist society such as the Bolsheviks seek to build . . . Whatever the future form of the Russian state and Russian society the . . . Revolution is assiduously battering away at the peasant's old world, is loosening the mediæval fastnesses that have so long held him captive."

For anyone who is sick of propaganda and who sincerely wants to find out what the peasant, the real Russia, is thinking about, what his hopes are, how the government affects his daily existence, and how he is beginning the struggle to develop a new national life, this book opens the door of understanding. It has the vividness of word and phrase, and the unlabored literary expression that so frequently characterizes what is written from close contact with life itself. It is "a document of a simple people in the travail of a great agony and a great ecstasy."

In contrast with this close-up of Russian life, by one who speaks the language and is on familiar ground, Mr. Nearing's book on "Education in Soviet Russia" is frankly a collection of notes and "pen-pictures" rather than a thorough study which the brevity of his visit did not permit. In the two months at his disposal, however, Mr. Nearing managed to obtain a great deal of information. He sets forth the scheme of educational administration throughout the country, the types of schools, colleges, and universities, the curricula, and the relationship between pupils and teachers; and he adds concreteness and interest by weaving in descriptions of visits to schools and conversations with teachers and pupils. His 150 pages provide about the only attempt in English to give a comprehensive description of the aims, methods, and organization of the educational system which has developed since the Revolution.

The close ties between the schools and industrial life will interest those who have seen the need for similar relationship here, and he points out that the very groups of the universities has led them to utilize laboratory facilities in the actual industries instead of duplicating costly equipment. The project method is extensively applied in elementary education, and anyone who thinks of Russia as benightedly isolated will be amazed to learn that the Dalton plan is prevalently known and used, that the names of Dewey, Thorndike, and other American educators are familiar to Russian school people, and that such publications as those of the Harvard Business Service, the Babson Statistical Service, and the Bulletins of the U. S. Federal Reserve Board are to be found in the library of the Institute of World Economics and Politics, founded by the Communist Academy.

The early and crude effort to take factory workers into institutions of higher education for which they were utterly unprepared is now seen fitting, as one phase of adult education, into the general educational scheme.

In view of the considerable testimony as to the use of the schools for communist propaganda and the instilling of hatred against the bourgeoisie, and as to the "cleansing" of universities of their non-proletarian students, one could wish that more attention had been given to these phases of the subject. Discrimination was frankly defended by a vice-commissar of public instruction who is quoted as saying: "Foreign newspapers blame the Soviet authorities because they keep the bourgeoisie out of the schools. The children of the bourgeoisie are going to these schools in order to acquire the knowledge that will enable them to overthrow the peasants' and workers' government. Why should we train our enemies?"

Mr. Nearing gives a sympathetic, in the main an enthusiastic, account of Soviet education; and those who are familiar with his whole-hearted espousal of the Soviet experiment will perhaps be surprised to learn that he did not find an "educational paradise." "Quite the reverse. But he sees in the struggle to secure educational results a "fascinating drama" and predicts that it will also be a "fruitful source of educational knowledge and progress." The information that he presents seems to warrant his statement and one is glad to join with him in the wish that trained educators from America may visit Russia increasingly and bring us more first-hand reports on the aims and methods of the Soviet schools.

Plastic Values

THE ART IN PAINTING. By ALBERT C. BARNES. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1926. \$6.

Reviewed by ALFRED H. BARR, JR.
Princeton University

THIS is an important book because it presents a systematic and confident statement of what is central in the "modern" attitude toward painting. Its five hundred pages are the expression of an energetic critic, of an experimenter in the education of art-appreciation, and of the owner of the finest collection of modern paintings in America.

The word "plastic" is the battle-cry of Mr. Barnes's challenging dialectic. "The things that a painter can work into various forms are line, color, and space: these are the plastic means." "The study of a painting consists in nothing more than the determination of how successfully the artist has integrated the plastic means to create a form which is powerful and expressive of his personality." "Relevant judgment or criticism of a picture involve the ability to abstract from the appeal of subject matter and consider only the plastic means in their adequacy as constituents of plastic form." Banishment of subject-matter is recommended so that one may consider a painting "only in terms of color, line, mass, space, plastic form." It is symptomatic that Mr. Barnes himself has succeeded in disinfecting himself of any spurious interests "so that of the hundreds of paintings upon detailed analysis of which this book is based scarcely a score are known to the author in terms of their subject matter." He condemns "the painter who habitually accentuates those human values, religious, sentimental, dramatic, in terms not purely plastic. Raphael sins grievously in this respect and so do Fra Angelico, Mantegna, Luini, Murillo, Turner, Delacroix, and Millet; and for that reason they are all second or third rate painters."

Mr. Barnes will find many, especially among those whom Aldous Huxley terms "the absurd young," who are more or less in sympathy with his position. Among them is the reviewer who has frequently found himself engaged in a long analysis of a painting without the slightest consciousness of subject matter until some philistine undergraduate brings the discussion to earth by asking why the madonna has such a funny chin. The undergraduate's impatience is pardonable. His æsthetic illiteracy is shared by all but a few of those who find pictures interesting. Subject-matter has always been of predominant importance to the majority of cultivated people; most of the minority turn their attention to technique or archaeology. Only a few are deeply interested in plastic values. Nor has this few up till our own time included many influential critics. Aristotle, Lucian, Vasari, Diderot, Taine, and Ruskin, have all helped the public to lose themselves in what Mr. Barnes would term with much good reason irrelevancies. But even if it were possible, would it be wise to emphasize plastic values to the exclusion of subject matter, historical and biographical backgrounds, archaeological problems, stylistic differentiation, literary association, and all the ancillary baggage which is customarily presented in a book on painting or in a college art course? So far as education is concerned, some carefully devised compromise is the obvious solution. But extreme as it may appear, Mr. Barnes's position is temporarily very powerful. If by the literary canons of the last century he seems to over-emphasize the rhetoric of painting, by the canons of music he is merely revealing essentials. In the light of history and experience neither fashion is final, though at present the latter is crescent.

After presenting this philosophy of plastic criticism, Mr. Barnes applies it to the history of painting and to the analyses of several hundred pictures. The historical errors are too frequent to catalogue. They may mislead the tyro but they will trouble only the pedant. Mr. Barnes is almost ostentatiously interested, not in facts, but values. One must indicate, however, one false generalization which has become a commonplace among the enthusiastic but ill-informed partisans of modern art. We read that "anarchy, falsity, charlatanism, and ugliness are the stock terms of abuse applied to every great artist by

his own generation." The increasing eccentricity of the artist has made this true during the last hundred years, but before 1800 very few artists of the first order were discouraged by philistine rancor. Even El Greco, that archetype of distortion, was looked upon by his contemporaries as one of the foremost painters in Spain.

The plastic means of the great Masters are dissected diligently and often with a considerable originality. Giotto's youthful works at Assisi are found to possess "a monumental knockout power" lacking in the more mature work at Padua. Uccello, Piero della Francesca, El Greco, Daumier receive a fashionable and well-merited emphasis, but it is difficult to accept the elevation of the monotonous Hobbema above Seghers, Ruysdael, and Cuyp, or to discover in Cosimo Roselli a neglected master of composition. And it is curious that Mr. Barnes finds little more than "a very great ability to use paint" in Vermeer whose composition so remarkably anticipates the intimate effects of Degas, Bonnard, and Matisse.

Modern painting is handled more convincingly and sometimes brilliantly. The plastic developments of Renoir and Cézanne are very thoroughly analyzed by the man whose Renoirs and Cézannes should be the envy of every museum in the country—especially the Metropolitan. It is refreshing to find no reference to vorticism, futurism, synchromism, and the other ephemeral teatop tempests which though long dead are still made to resound in academic kitchens. Nor is pure cubism taken seriously, "for the idea of abstract form divorced from a clue however vague, of its representative equivalent in the real world is sheer nonsense." It is well observed that the "metaphysical abstract" which misled Picasso may be of less permanent influence than Matisse's "utilization of the situations of every day life." There is further excellent criticism of Picasso. Soutine, Modigliani, and Pascin whose names appear continually in conjunction with those of Michelangelo, Titian, Poussin, and Greco are made subordinate only to Matisse and Picasso in the contemporary hierarchy. Certainly Mr. Barnes is right in seeing in Pascin a great and very moving draughtsman. Soutine perhaps does not deserve such trumpeting.

Of this volume which is as ponderous as any textbook, by far the most entertaining portion is devoted to the castigation of Mr. Barnes's less "plastic" contemporaries who are arraigned under the chapter "Academic Art Criticism." One may quote with ruckets the *bon mot* on Elie Faure's four volume work on the history of art which "might with propriety be entitled a historical romance in which painters and paintings are extensively mentioned." The most elaborate drubbing is reserved for Bernard Berenson "who has aided materially in the identification of the works of some early Italian painters by means of investigations that are primarily and fundamentally akin to those of handwriting experts" but whose æsthetics "embody most of the characteristics of academicism and irrelevant sentimentalism."

Mr. Barnes's position is epitomized by a page where side by side are reproduced an Entombment by Titian and a still-life by Cézanne. Below we read: "The design in these two paintings is very similar, showing irrelevancy of subject matter to plastic value." But what price plastic value! Do we, after all, profit largely by reducing Titian's noble tragedy to the terms of apples upon a crinkly napkin? Mr. Barnes will yet drive us to re-reading Ruskin, and to the tearful contemplation of those "positively saint-like" animals of Sir Edwin Landseer, R. A.

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