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Books of Special Interest

The Essence of Science

THE ANATOMY OF SCIENCE. By GILBERT NEWTON LEWIS. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1927. \$5.

HOW many of those who are proud to be living in a scientific age are prepared to give a synopsis of even one of the branches of science, far less to visualize, however dimly, the whole? Many have tried to help us in this difficult task of orientation, but as a rule they have omitted the personal touch; and it is perhaps the chief merit of Professor Lewis's book, "The Anatomy of Science," which provides in the form of a humanistic epistemological tabloid the concentrated essence of science, that its author is at once humorous, clear-headed, and broad-minded.

His kind, but firm dismissal of impediments like "ultimate truth" is reassuring; and such sentences as: "If we once get out of the child-like notion that every act is either right or wrong, that every statement is either false or true, that every question may be answered by a 'yes' or 'no,' we still recognize that with our present knowledge there are some statements which are more probable than others . . ." or "The growth of living thought is not to be repressed; and a cyclic thought is not a circle, but rather an ascending spiral which, with every turn, leads to greater heights" . . . show us within the first few pages what we may expect.

He starts from the oldest of mathematical sciences, Arithmetic, with a parable of how the concept of numbers might arise: once we have this machine, we find it turning on itself, as it were, and stamping out fractions. Thus we get a "system with the properties of a continuum . . . the number system in full correspondence with the positions of points on a geometrical line," and so we pass into realms of Space and Geometry; thence to Time and Motion, and Matter in Motion. From a comparison of three types of geometry, and an account of Newton's principles and those of Einstein, we notice a complete identity between the kinematics of Newton and the non-Euclidean Geometry characterized by shear rotation; but since Einstein's discovery means that we must abandon the postulate of universal time and the geometry that went with it, we must seek a new geometrical theory which is to be found in the geometry of asymptotic rotation. This illustrates a point emphasized earlier in the book, that mathematics is not false or true, but rather interesting and useful in so far as it fits a particular system.

In the section on Light and the Quantum, Mr. Lewis deals with the principles which "suggest the properties of an ideal continuum or a discontinuum," and reminds us that in the "process of growing thought the integers, once invented, began as it were to spin about themselves a continuous web until they became mere singular points embedded in the continuum of the general number series." A crucial experiment, which follows a discussion of the latest theories of light, "gives powerful evidence for a theory which not only is in full harmony with our relative geometry, but also removes the last foothold in the physical sciences of the concept of temporal causality."

"Do you believe in miracles?" asks Professor Lewis in the chapter on Probability and Entropy, and proceeds to describe the chances of finding a weight some distance above the floor of a box containing water, in which we have put it! There follows an interesting consideration of the second law of thermodynamics, and of one-way and two-way time.

In dealing with the non-mathematical sciences he stresses the subtle distinction between animate and inanimate nature, and this leads him to his final chapter, "Life: Body and Mind." Strictly speaking, Professor Lewis has here crossed the border of his domain, but his treatment of a subject on which he is not an authority is fresh and undogmatic. It is, however, doubtful whether he has fully considered the Double-language solution of the so-called Mind-Body problem. On the whole, his conclusions will be comforting to vitalists. He insists that the struggle for existence, for example, may be studied by methods, which, while truly scientific, are entirely independent of the methods of geometry, mechanics, and chemistry; and that we require two distinct vocabularies for dealing with weights on the one hand and the behavior of man on the other.

Professor Lewis speaks of his work as a contemporaneous cross-section of science; actually it is more than this. He has shown relationships which are indispensable for a real grasp of the science of to-day, but which we have often neglected or been unable to make for ourselves.

Modern Mysticism

A YANKEE PASSIONAL. By SAMUEL ORNITZ. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHAN SMERTENKO

ONE really needs to be blessed with a high degree of that selective faculty which is possessed by Mr. Ornitiz's favorite character to get any pleasure whatsoever from "A Yankee Passional." "I don't skip, Dan," Liam O'Hegerty explains when the boy marvels as "page after page flipped under his agile surgeon's fingers" . . . "I read instinctively . . . I separate ideas from the conventional clutter of phrases." It must be added, however, that the clutter of phrases which constitutes this work is anything but conventional. Mr. Ornitiz utilizes a combination of rhapsody, stream-of-consciousness reporting, journalistic exposition, and sheer nonsense to produce a hot welter of intellectual and emotional responses in the reader which, to judge by my own reaction, finally simmers down to indignant irritation.

It is not that "A Yankee Passional" makes difficult reading. The author is sufficiently skillful to render his confusion intelligible—and one does skip. But it is provoking to find so many unnecessary words where the purpose is plain, the theme simple, and every character naive and monochromatic. Indeed, resentment at the fact that Mr. Ornitiz buries every oyster of a situation—and very few of them contain the pearl of an idea—in crass and gummy verbiage may obscure the more important critical reaction that, for all its lascivious puppet play, this novel is an acute study of the expression which mysticism must take in modern times.

Mr. Ornitiz has a two-fold objective. He

tries to portray the development of a mystic against the materialistic background of the past quarter of a century. And in this he succeeds remarkably well, taking his hero, a Yankee of mixed British blood, through the phases of sex-stirred adolescence and mortifying fanaticism to a dignified self-sufficiency. Until the moment of his tragic disillusionment Dan Matthews believes that he, the Catholic Church, and the United States are all moving in the right direction; but the Cardinal slays his faith, and the patriotic hoodlums of his native town crucify him because his unadulterated Christianity is as repugnant to them as to "His Mystic Body—His Church and His priests."

The other goal that Mr. Ornitiz sets himself is to reveal the East Side where he brings Dan Matthews both for purposes of artistic contrast and because it is the *milieu* he knows best. And here, impossible though it may seem for the author of "Haunch, Paunch and Jowl," he fails lamentably. His knowledge plays on its poverty and passions and politics, its vice and idealism, its sophistication and stupidity, its peculiarities and its universality; but it does not illumine so much as it distorts. Primarily the fault lies in his confused technique. For, like the beams of powerful searchlights thrown on a large and irregular body from different angles, his varying and inconsistent viewpoints serve rather to deepen shadows and project fantastic shapes than to shed clarifying brilliance. At any rate, one is much more conscious of the monstrosities thus created than of the hidden minutiae disclosed.

Dr. Horace Howard Furness, Jr., Editor of the Variorum Shakespeare, has made a unique find in the form of the diary of Junius Brutus Booth, father of Edwin Booth and himself a Shakespearean actor of note. The diary, written when Booth was a young man, came to light in a dusty storeroom of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, one of the oldest theatres in the country. In the same basket of old papers Dr. Furness discovered a playbill announcement of the elder Booth's appearance in that theatre in "Richard III," and a letter written by a patroness of Convent Garden, New York, introducing him to the managers there and in this way starting him on his way to immortal fame. The diary itself contains comments on a European trip. Dr. Furness plans to present it to its author's grand-daughter, Mrs. Ignatius Booth Crossman of New York, the

Current Christian Thinking

By GERALD B. SMITH

"Here is an invigorating breath of fresh air blowing through a wilderness of theological confusion."—*Unity.*

"Mr. Smith presents an excellent survey of the state of religious thinking in the United States to-day. His sections on Fundamentalism, Modernism and the controversy over evolution are especially good."—*The American Mercury.*

\$2.00

Religious Thought in the Last Quarter Century

Edited by

GERALD B. SMITH

Shirley Jackson Case, J. M. P. Smith, Harold R. Willoughby, Ozora S. Davis, and others have contributed to this survey of the recent trends of religious thought. From a survey of the literature published during the last quarter century, they have been able to draw significant conclusions about the whole progress and development of modern religious thinking.

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SALLY OF SHOW ALLEY

By HOMER KING GORDON

THE gay white lights of Broadway form the background of this vivid story. From the time that gay red-headed Sally Larkin makes her first bow before the footlights, the plot moves forward swiftly, surely, breathlessly to her final exit. You will love Sally!

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THOMAS Y. CROWELL CO.
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Foreign Literature

New French Fiction

VASCO. By MARC CHADOURNE. Paris: Librairie Plon. 1928.

FAITES VOS JEUX. By BERNARD FAY. Paris: Bernard Grasset. 1928.

LA FONTAINE DIVINE. By FORTUNE ANDRIEU. Paris: Editions des Cahiers du Sud. 1928.

Reviewed by AMELIA VON ENDE

THE record of a restless soul, seeking to find itself and fleeing from itself, from its heritage of features, manners, habits, seeking peace "from the demons at war within"—to use an Ibsen phrase—in a far-off exotic clime, among people living in the simplicity of an Eden lost to the civilized world; this is the burden of Chadourne's book. It is not a new theme. But whether Mallarmé's poem on "Vasco" inspired it, or "Noa-Noa" by Gauguin and Morice, the author has endowed it with the peculiar fascination which esthetic morbidity rarely fails to exercise on sensitive readers.

Note the beginning of the story: Armistice Day in Tarento; the populace crowding the square, watching the hands of the clock as they approach the hour which is to end the nightmare of four long years—and directly under the clock the pale and languid face of one who is deaf to the triumphant blare of trumpets, blind to the gaily fluttering colors, indifferent to the exalted mood of the moment which has transfigured the most commonplace faces by the touch of an ideal: Peace! "Peace!" repeats the narrator of this strange tale, as he follows the unmoved onlooker, his friend and kin, through the crowded streets into a quiet, cool room in a luxuriant lupanar, deserted by its inmates for the day. "At last it is over!" he adds, and the other murmurs doubtfully: "Over?"

Thus the author strikes the keynote of the story, shows the attitude of Philippe, whom his friends call "Vasco," towards the world into which he had been born. Like his mother, he felt that it was too narrow, too plain a world. Returning from the war, he is unable to resume life as he had known it before, and escapes to that island world of the South Sea which has haunted poets and artists with the lure of life in a land and among people not yet contaminated by civilization. Chadourne traces Philippe's quest for a vague goal through a series of adventures peculiar to life on those islands, until he succumbs to the sinister spell of an individual whose Mephistophelian cynicism and abject decadence infect him and lead to his downfall.

Rebels against the traditions of kinship, the conventions of society, esthetes seeking an intangible ideal of beauty, anarchists placing themselves on a plane beyond good or evil, no longer shock our sensibilities when we meet them in fiction or drama. But a more convincing study of such a character has hardly been achieved by any other writer. A mind warped by a fixed idea, a will paralyzed by endless yearning for something unknown, vacillating between Christ and the Nietzschean Superman, fleeing from others and from himself, Philippe is a subject for psychiatric study. Just before he offers to take the priest's place in the leper colony, he sums up his past in the following confession:

I have fled from people that bore me, whom I mistrust or whom I hate. The others I do not know. I fled from my country because I had a horror of its narrow confines, only to begin anew the same endless round. . . . What did I want to find at the end of it all, the end of the world? Myself, myself and myself. A man always restless, always desolate, without the courage of getting out of himself. I can go no further, and I do not want to go back. Down there, or here, it will always be the same thing. I have no faith. I can not, I do not know, I do not want to die. Why? I do not know. . . .

On reading the first four pages of Bernard Fay's book, "Faites vos Jeux," one is struck by the kinship between Chadourne's "Vasco" and the unnamed hero of "La Manille aux Enchères," which introduces the collection of stories, each of which is symbolically named after a game of cards. He, too, revolts against the past in the person of father and mother, home and country, and escapes to America.

At a time when sex in its crude and morbid phases is the theme of innumerable plays and novels, a love story, ideal in conception and poetic in form, seems almost an anomaly. "La Fontaine Divine" evokes

memories of Dante and Beatrice, Petrarch and Laura. Were it not for the prologue, in which the author produces the documents upon which the novel is founded, one might imagine it the work of a scholar, who, inspired by his studies of that period, had attempted to reproduce the spirit of those immortal loves in modern garb. A modernization has indeed been attempted. M. Andrieu, the grandson of Robert, Count d'Olbie, the hero of the book, felt justified by a remark of his ancestor, to date the story fifty years ahead—instead of 1874, the time is 1925. In the opinion of the reviewer he created an anachronism, for both in spirit and sentiment the story is not of to-day.

The reader of fiction revolving solely around a well-constructed plot will be disappointed in the book, the charm of which lies in the poetic descriptions and the rarified spiritual atmosphere. Moreover, the average novel reader would not have the patience to follow the readings of the Count, who had received his degree from the Sorbonne for a thesis on "Lyrisim in the Literature of the Ancients," however interesting his selections from Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and other lyric poetry may have been to his audience at Divonne. They would want to know what was going to happen; and from their point of view, precious little happens.

Foreign Notes

JULIEN BENDA, whose stimulating writing is too little known outside of France, has recently issued a volume that is both interesting and provocative. "La Trahison des Clercs" (Paris: Grasset), as he calls it, is first a development of the thesis that the modern world tends to be governed more and more by political passions and less and less by political ideals, and second a consideration of the attitude of the *clerics*, by which term M. Benda understands what we call the "Intellectuals." These *clerics*, he maintains, should think merely for the end of "thinking rightly," and then proceeds to show how generally they have betrayed the cause of right thinking. He cites among others as blameworthy Barrès, Péguy, Maurras, d'Annunzio, William James, and Kipling. Though there may be many to disagree with his findings, they cannot but be interested in them.

A reprint of articles which Maximilian Harden wrote in the twenty-five years preceding the War has been issued under the title "Von Versailles nach Versailles" (Hellerau bei Dresden: Avalun). The book contains an introductory survey of the whole period.

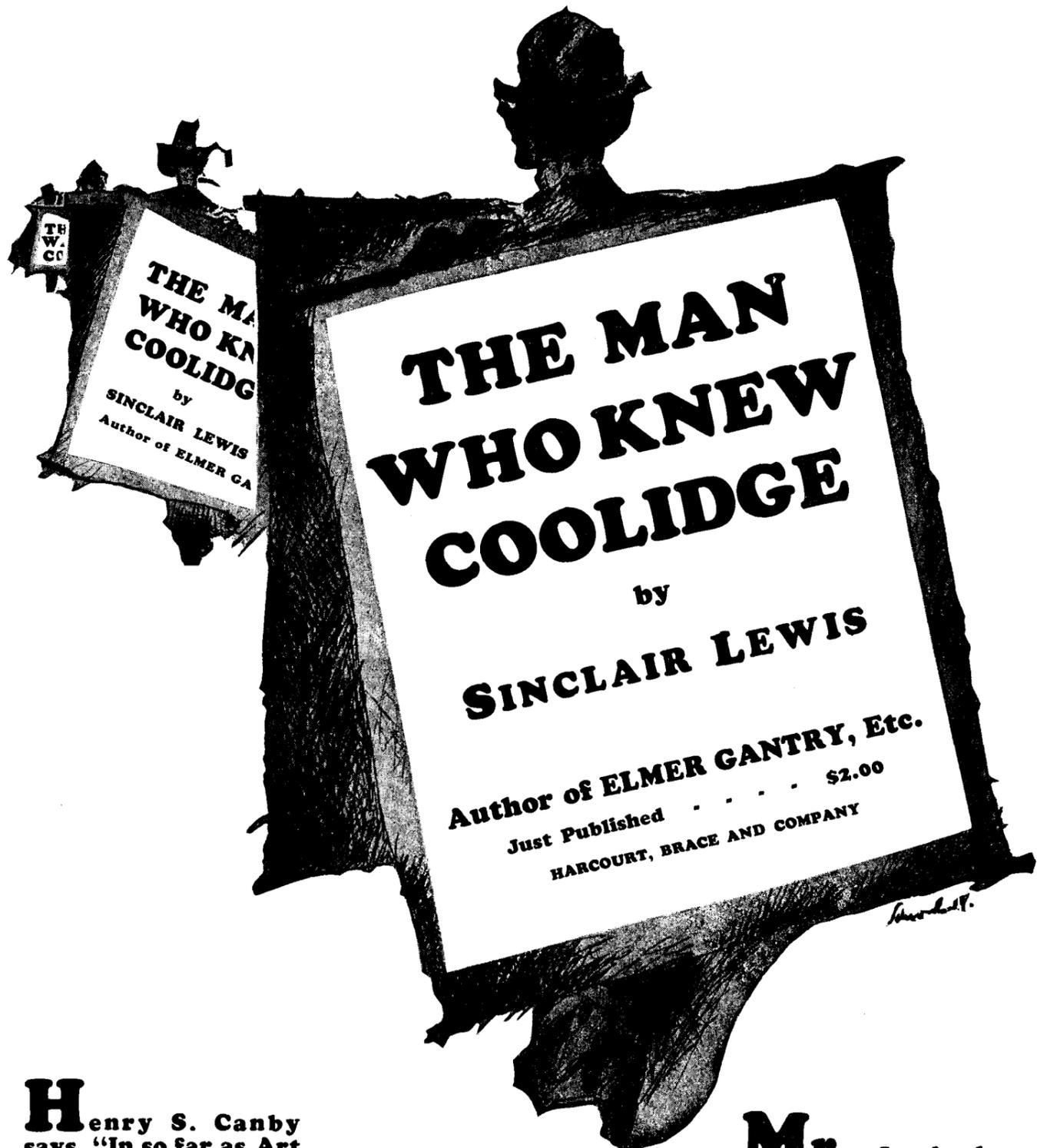
What is perhaps the first important book by an Italian upon the early Siense school has just appeared in "Trecentisti Senesi" (Valori Plastici), a volume in which Emilio Cecchi writes with scholarly critical judgment and yet with animation. The book

contains numerous phototype reproductions of Siense masterpieces.

That picturesque genius of contemporary France who alternates between devoting himself with passionate application to painting and spending long periods in a sanitarium for inebriates, Maurice Utrillo, has found an excellent biographer in Francis Carco. His "La Légende et la Vie d'Utrillo" (Paris: Grasset) is a vivid and moving book, full of color and vigor.

The fourth volume of the "Enciclopedia delle Moderne Arti Decorative Italiane," edited by Guido Carangoni, has recently appeared. The volume, "L'Oreficeria" (Milan: Aschina), is by Carlo A. Felice, and contains a hundred half-tone plates after specimens of modern Italian metalwork, accompanied by an introductory text. This introduction presents a survey of the history of metalworking from the earliest times, with particular emphasis on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as discussing contemporary craftsmanship.

The oldest letter in the world will be on show at the Exhibition of Antiques, which the British Antique Dealers' Association is to hold in the Grafton Galleries next May. Dated 5,000 B. C., the letter refers to a deed of purchase or hire of a field by one Annini from Simti-Ha. It is written in cuneiform characters on fire clay, and when found at Ur was enclosed in a clay envelope. The writer lived in the Dynasty of Laraza, which was the first dynasty of Babylon.



Henry S. Canby says, "In so far as Art is concerned, we may rest content. Sinclair Lewis has it; Lowell Schmaltz is a creation."

Mr. Lewis has devoted all of his satirical genius to this triumph of portraiture.