

## Books of Special Interest

### A Man of Gusto

HENRY THOREAU, THE COSMIC YANKEE. By J. BROOKS ATKINSON. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1927.

Reviewed by HARRY HAYDEN CLARK  
Middlebury College

HERE is an attractive little book which should lead many who have wrongly considered Thoreau a "sulker" to catch Mr. Atkinson's contagious enthusiasm for the cosmic Yankee's "enjoyment of life," the "tremendous gusto of his career," and "the lambent flame of beauty in his writing." In the same "economical, deep-bitted strokes" he attributes to Thoreau, the author etches the portrait of the "poet-naturalist-philosopher" in the first chapter, and then he proceeds—in a delightfully pungent, sharp-edged, salty style—to present Thoreau adventuring on life and to discuss his relations with Emerson, his "message," his books, his humor, his "Journals," and finally the success of his philosophy as manifested in his testimony regarding his own happiness. Readers of the ardent and merited praise of the "Journals"—once so formidable in their many volumes—will be glad to avail themselves of "The Heart of Thoreau's Journals," lately published, admirably selected and edited by another lover of Thoreau—Odell Shepard. Mr. Atkinson finds that "the essence of his thinking was never more apt than it is now." . . . "If in the course of time, we reconcile our instrumentalism with the individual man, if we reclaim the individual from the jumble of material living and discover the true sources of happiness, inevitably we shall go to Thoreau for the vision."

Mr. Atkinson's book is in general a sympathetic, admirably written, but somewhat unsound introduction to Thoreau; it may antidote earlier criticism in stressing the zest of his life and the occasional lyric beauty of his writing. It is, however, somewhat one-sided in dealing with Thoreau's thought, especially his all-important attitude toward nature. Was he a pantheist? It is misleading to insist so strongly that he was "a foster-child of nature," that his "supreme message . . . was merely the enjoyment of life," that he longed for "union with nature," that the chapter on Economy is simply "exhilarating shadow-boxing," and that "the poetry and the fun of the adventure remain the dominant characteristics of Walden." Now the Concord seer was a good deal more than an overgrown Boy Scout. What is needed here is balancing, an ability to see both sides of the man, or that penetrating discrimination displayed by Professor Norman Foerster in his epoch-making study of "Nature in American Literature." Mr. Atkinson very rightly pays homage to Thoreau's nobility of character, but without perceiving how that nobility was acquired.

Let Thoreau testify to his own humanism. Instead of worshipping nature as "the guardian" of his "moral being" as the youthful Wordsworth did, instead of saying that we may "unhesitatingly commit the guidance of life to instinct" as Schiller did, the cosmic Yankee declares: "What is peculiar in the life of a man consists not in his obedience, but his opposition, to his instincts. In one way or another he strives to live a *super-natural* life." He is, I believe, a seeker of moral perfection in his way, as the New England Puritans were in their way. Scorning the romantic notion of natural goodness, he is "conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers. It is reptile and sensual, and perhaps cannot be wholly expelled." Passionately devoted as he is to the simplicity and beauty of nature, he is forever conscious that "we are not wholly involved in nature," he is aware of "a certain doubleness," and like St. Paul he distinguishes sharply between "the law of the members" and "the law of the spirit," between Emerson's "law for things" and "law for man." The child of nature can say, "Nature is hard to be overcome, but she must be overcome." The chapter on "Higher Laws" is an extended treatment of the necessity of conquering nature, instinct, and our animal inheritance in order that we may abide by the higher laws of man. Had Mr. Atkinson not ignored Thoreau's intellectual heritage and his relation to the Romantic Movement, the contrast between Thoreau and the romanticists would have been obvious. The "naturalist" confesses he cannot even think in the midst of nature: "True, out-of-doors my thought is commonly drowned. . . I expand more surely in my chamber."

It is in his tendency to ignore that side of Thoreau which I have been illustrating—I think the nobler side—that Mr. Atkinson invites the charge of presenting an attractive but somewhat unfaithful portrait of the man who is perhaps America's soundest thinker.

### On Education

WHY STOP LEARNING? By DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927. \$2.

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER'S interest in education has run like an under-current beneath the surface of her novels. Brought up in an academic atmosphere, studying at several American universities and in Europe, acting as secretary of the Horace Mann School in New York and as a member of the State Board of Education of Vermont, Mrs. Fisher has always had her finger on the educational pulse of the country and is thoroughly qualified to speak concerning "a problem compared to which the riddle of the Sphinx looks like a sum in first-grade arithmetic, the problem of getting everybody in a democracy educated." The problem so defined is very fully treated in "Why Stop Learning?" wherein Mrs. Fisher foregoes fiction to write what she calls a running commentary on the educational research reports of the Carnegie Corporation and many others.

It is education, not literacy, with which "Why Stop Learning?" deals, as the author very emphatically makes clear. Complete literacy in the United States is now practically an accomplished fact. A little over one hundred years ago even the idea of making literate every inhabitant of a large country was unheard of. When the idea finally did occur, America not unnaturally expected its accomplishment to usher in a millennium. Yet here we all are today reading and writing and doing a little arithmetic, and not the slightest sign of a millennium upon the horizon. In our struggle after literacy, education has eluded us. "Schools, even the best schools, can only give . . . schooling. Education must be mixed and seasoned with life experience, which is the one element no school can give and no young person can have." And yet "with hardly an exception, the national attempt toward education has concentrated itself upon the minds of our youth."

Comparatively unobserved, at least as far as directional significance is concerned, there have been growing up in America various institutions which make voluntary post-school education possible. These may be scattered and fumbling attempts in the face of a critical situation, but here, Mrs. Fisher feels, we must look for some answer to the

problem of producing an educated citizenry. To the more important of these institutions "Why Stop Learning?" devotes a chapter each, treating them historically as far as the shortness of their life-spans permits and prophesying a little as to what they may develop into. The section on "Correspondence Schools" is packed with vivid facts concerning the piratic practices of the dishonest members of this group. To the casual reader it will come with something of a shock to discover that he himself might in thirty-two states of the Union open a correspondence school without any preparation whatever and be quite within his legal rights in granting whatever degrees he might fancy in the arts and sciences. It is surprising reading. The chapter on "The Free Public Library" lacks this hair-raising element but becomes in Mrs. Fisher's hands a dramatic tale, beginning with "a queer, half-baked product of the revolutionary upheaval in France—a gesticulating, indiscreetly noisy Frenchman named Vattemare," the fader of the free public library; revealing a committee in Boston, disturbed by the gift of fifty volumes from the City of Paris, grudgingly providing "a place for same;" and coming down to a most enthusiastic interpretation of the work and ideals of present-day librarians.

Other chapters deal with Museums, Lyceums, Extension Courses, Parents-as-Students, Workers' Education. A presentation of "Women's Clubs" gives a decidedly foreshortened view of the time extent of women's activity and deals so fully with a particular club, scarcely exceptional, that the more general club work in adult education is somewhat obscured. "What Other People Are Doing," on the other hand, is full of interesting and new material, especially the sketch of the Danish adult school system. Although the book is written for the general reader rather than specialists, it is difficult to understand why Mrs. Fisher has adopted a style (so unlike her natural one) of somewhat slangy journalese in a work pleading for deeper spiritual and cultural values.

### A Stock-Taking

THE SCIENTIFIC HABIT OF THOUGHT. By FREDERICK BARRY. New York: Columbia University Press. 1927. \$3.50.

Reviewed by P. B. McDONALD  
New York University

HERE is a book that should be read by every teacher of science and research-worker in the country. It is a sympathetic but critical stock-taking of our modern science and scientists written by a man of unusually broad attainments. But the reader should be warned in advance to read the last chapter first. Like many scientific lecturers Doctor Barry (who is assistant professor of the interesting new subject, History of Science, at Columbia University)

lays down his difficult theses first, and warms into an extremely human and pertinent commentator when he has the professional abstractions out of the way. The first two chapters are a little too concentrated and meaty; the last two are a delight.

Says the author in part:

There has come about a subtle change in the tone of cultivated society. The educated man whose interests are restricted to the older humanistic range feels, oddly, not out of place but somewhat detached. He suspects that he no longer shares in its deeper concerns. He is made to feel that he is living on the surface of things; out of touch with great events, the stir of which he feels but cannot grasp, the significance of which he surmises but does not clearly understand. . . . There is an unmistakable tone of earnestness in nearly all discussion. Its tone is serious. The pleasant allusive interchange of thought, the whimsicality, the repartee, is seldom heard. . . . Everywhere and at every hour the cultivated world seems spontaneously and with cheerful earnestness to be going back to school. . . . The scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century have actually remodelled the structure of western civilization. . . . The foundation of all cultural education henceforth must be significant knowledge. . . . Our father's education was certainly too thin.

From these significant excerpts, it must not be inferred that the book is merely a Huxleyian or Wellsian argument for education based on science instead of on the classics. The unique fact about the book is that it breaks new ground. In his laboratory at Columbia, Dr. Barry has been doing pioneer thinking in assessing science and linking it up with metaphysics. How few scientists, for example, trace scientific concepts back to the philosophical implications of the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics, the Atomists, and the Peripatetics. Such liaison tracing is of great importance at this stage of our scientific development, as is scarcely necessary to point out. The natural corollary of reading the book is to wish for its 360 pages to be expanded by additional commentaries and concrete applications into a larger volume. For example, the consequences of our scientists' predilection for empiricism, pragmatism, and skepticism could be revealed in a more intimate and clear-headed way than Professor Dewey has so far seen fit to do. The implication of James and the neo-realists, and of Russell and his changing premises, might be woven illuminatingly into the picture. But, most interesting of all, the chapter on the elements of theory could be indefinitely expanded to include fuller interpretation of the history of science fresh from the author's lectures to the fortunate Columbia students in those classes. Dr. Barry is one of the few men who really know what and how scientists think and have thought; his greatest fault is his fear of criticism from the specialist and pedant for being too discursive—or (that dreaded word in scientific circles) too "popular."



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## Foreign Literature

### A Tale in Verse

TOM UND SYLVESTER. By EMIL LUDWIG. Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt. 1927.

Reviewed by A. W. G. RANDALL

THIS is either a youthful effort on the part of the now world-famous biographer of emperors and chancellors, or the result of a thinking-back to youthful experiences. The publishers' "puff" speaks of Wieland, but the poem more readily recalls the lighthearted side of Byron to readers of English, in its combination of wit, pleasant cynicism, unusual situation, and nature-poetry never quite wholehearted enough in its enthusiasm to do away with the general effect of badinage. Byron, we feel, would have been quite capable of opening a long tale in verse with a scene in a sleeping-car. It is there, going over the St. Gotthard pass, that Tom and Sylvester meet. They strike up a friendship, find they are persons of leisure and taste, fall in love, as Herr Ludwig has clearly done, with that Southern landscape which greets your delighted gaze once the long tunnel is passed, and arrange to stay together in a village of the Ticino uplands. Here, like happy schoolboys, they wander about the hills, jump over streams, find pleasure in the music of the waterfalls. Soon, of course, they discover an Eve in this Eden, a strapping young person of outdoor tastes, but with freshness, grace, and an excellent figure. She lives alone with her father in a cottage in the wood; since the death of his wife the old man has retired to this Paradise and settled down as the friend and benefactor of the village below. Both Tom and Sylvester fall in love with Valeska, make friends with the father as a first step, and join in the instrumental quartettes every evening in the cottage, make approving comments on the old man's excellent taste in food and wine.

Tom's passion for Valeska grows, but she is still hesitating—her retired life in the village has made her shy. Naturally, one day, when Tom surprises her at her bath in the pool at the foot of the waterfall, she is shocked by his attack, overwhelmed by shame, and gives vigorous expression to her feelings on recovery. The upshot is that Tom retires leaving the field to Sylvester, who, pursuing more warily, gains her and is duly married soon after in the Burgomaster's office, much to the scandal of the pious villagers, to whom, of course, a mere civil marriage is no marriage at all. Valeska's married happiness is marred by the shadow of a thought that it was Tom whom she had loved; he, at any rate, had taught her what passion was and had awakened her instincts. She has a child, Felix, and the end, a good specimen of the poet's malicious humor, represents the old man playing alone with his grandchild:

*Der Alte sieht ihn an, halb schlau, halb fromm,  
Er zickt und denkt dabei:—Der ganze Tom.*

Hardly a plot to fill out a short story in prose, but the handling of it gives it interest and freshness. As a diversion, too, from Herr Ludwig's business of conjuring up the vanished great it has novelty, but one hardly feels poetry likely to become his main literary occupation.

### Bojer's Latest

DET NYE TEMPEL (The New Temple). By JOHAN BOJER. Oslo: Norsk Gyldendal. 1927.

Reviewed by JULIUS MORITZER

READERS of Scandinavian literature in translation may recall "The Great Hunger" with which Johan Bojer made his earlier impression on the American public through a characterization that stamped him as one of the outstanding European novelists of the day. That he has not written *finis* to "The Great Hunger" is apparent from the fact that in his most recent novel, "The New Temple," the chief character of the former work, Per Holm, makes his reappearance. And where the religious theme was barely intimated before, Bojer now enters that domain somewhat prepared, it seems, to champion religion for what it does.

In "The Great Hunger" we saw Per Holm, the one-time world-famous engineer, finally reduced to poverty, when all that was good in him rose up so that he could even exhibit love toward the one who had done him the greatest injury. In "The New Temple," his son Lorents, as minister of the State Church, convinces the elder

Holm that despite the ecclesiasticism that he detests, the Supreme Being is to be found in the minds of men. Lorents, as a matter of fact, is Johan Bojer's instrumentality for telling how he himself feels on the subject of religion. As an interpreter of a humane-religious individualism, Bojer apparently finds in the church a community of interest. Communism, capitalism, and all the et ceteras identified with these opposing forces are featured in "The New Temple."

The moral of Johan Bojer's preachment is not far to seek. The abstract religious concept that he featured in "The Great Hunger" was not wholly satisfactory to him. He was not as yet ready to go the entire way and accept religion in its dogmatic requirements. Nor is he willing to do more in "The New Temple" than to have Per Holm declare that as such a priest as he would like to be he would want to be wholly independent of dogmatic ecclesiasticism.

"The New Temple" is not the most convincing book by Johan Bojer, but it will occasion interesting comment and afford a further insight into the mental workings of this Norwegian man of letters.

### Scholarship De Luxe

BIBLIOGRAPHIE DER GERMANISCHEN ZEITSCHRIFTEN. By Carl Diesch. Edited by FREDERICK W. J. HEUSER. Leipzig: Verlag von Karl W. Hiersemann. 1927.

Reviewed by ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD

THIS monumental work is scholarship *de luxe*. The handsome type on the great folio pages is a pleasure to behold. Moderation, however, would be in order if the volume were beautiful scholarship and nothing more. But it is also a priceless aid to scholarship; it is the guide of guides to those who may choose to work in the Germanic field in the future.

Quite apart from the twenty-eight pages of supplementary and corrective entries, the bibliography lists 4,642 magazines that deal, or have dealt, with literary, scientific, and general or popular themes; and it gives the essential data regarding them with an accuracy and condensation that puts Pierre Athanase Larousse to shame; it even routes a Continental time-table for *multum in parvo*, telling not only what the magazine was like, who edited it, and where it was published, but, what will probably prove most valuable of all, where the files of it may now be found.

Great and helpful though the compilation is, perfection was not to be expected. The list of abbreviations should have been explained in greater detail. As it stands, the volume is a cross-word puzzle the solutions of which are given only in part; the remainder can easily be worked out by the user, but the editors might well have solved them completely. Then there is the missing matter. Item 3,478 is "Scandinavia. A monthly review . . . 1884-86. Chicago. [Br. Mus. (unvolist.)]" That is all very well; but if this is included, then what of the *Scandinavia* No. 1, Vol. I, of which appeared January, 1924, in the more vigorous of the two Dakotas, only to die the death less than two years later? What of *Arena. Tidsskrift for Literatur, Teater og Kritik*, that excellent monthly that began to come out at Oslo in 1922 and died before the first lustrum had been completed?

But even so, we can only congratulate the Germans on this admirable enterprise at the same time that we laud without reservation Professor Heuser for having attended so faithfully and intelligently to our own side of the business. He has done a difficult and useful task well.

A careful and fully documented study of the agrarian elements in the Norwegian state has recently appeared from the pen of Halvdan Koht. "Norsk Bondereising" (Oslo: Aschehoug), as the volume is called, is a chronicle of the "bonde," or peasant as the word is usually translated into English, incorrectly, according to the London *Times Literary Supplement*, which says of him that the bonde "was the concentrated essence of the Norwegian people, including elements from all the previously existing ranks of society, and preserving through centuries of alien administration its traditional and peculiar culture, language, and character." The author is one of the leading historians of his country, and his work is based on accurate and wide knowledge.