

THE LIBRARY PAGE

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In this generation of widespread iconoclasm, in the literary heyday of the tribe of Mencken and Nathan, one is not quite so shocked as some of our fathers might have been at the frequent debunking of all that was once held sacred. But it seems

today that even the debunkers themselves are not safe, when the latest of the critics goes them one better and debunks the debunkers.

Since the comparatively recent change of literature from the uplifting to the deriding, it is only natural to expect a like change in criticism. Of this new group of critics, two have come our way, and since they are at least entertaining, the editor takes pleasure in passing them on.

"MEANING NO OFFENSE"

By—John Riddell

"Being some of the Life, Adventures and Opinions of Trader Riddell, an old Book Reviewer, in the Dark Continent of Contemporary Literature," as the author subtitles

it, this entertaining brain child of a "Vanity Fair" book reviewer not only is a thorough take-off of the "Trader Horn" which it burlesques, but is also a sharp missile thrown in the glass houses of modern American literature.

In the introductory chapter Mrs. Ethel Reader tells of how the old Trader approached her one evening while she was sitting placidly on the stoep of her Johannesburg home reading a Kathleen Norris novel, and after making due apologies for mentioning books to anyone who indulged in Norris, not only offered her a stack of old reviewers copies, but also offered to save her time and trouble by reading them for her. In the course of events the old man gets started on his reminiscences of a colorful past. During his travels he

has visited America and witnessed the rites of the American Josh House of Literature. "Bound by the rites of Egbo, I am to be blood brother of the cannibals," he whispers. "Look at that thumb. Mecken bit it off, Ma'am, in an argument about Taste. Me? I've seen the skulls heaped up in the Algonquin; Weaver and Farrar and Benet and the rest. Blood brother to the cannibal critics, where there are no gods but their gods..."

His first chapter is in imitation of the modern biographers, laughing out of court, in succession, Paxton Hibben, Ray Stannard Baker, Emil Ludwig, Marie Jenny Howe, Denis Tilden Lynch, Harold Lamb and our own dear Lindbergh. In the rest of the book he pursues this delightful course mimicing cleverly the style of each, and reducing each in turn to utter absurdity. His chapter on modern poetry is a neat jibe at the Dial group, while the "Dreiser Construction Company," is heavy but effective. The best bit of humor is in his "Equestrianism for Ladies," while the "New Ladies Clubs to Conquer," with its epic of Peter Pan Halliburton, is almost equal in mirth-provoking cracks.

No one is sacred here. Within this tale the very Gods of the moderns are not only pulled down for the time, but are also laughed at none too gently. Lewis, Mencken, Nathan, Dreiser, all are included in this saga of the literary wastelands.

It is a very neat piece of work, highly entertaining, and possibly containing some truth. What more could one ask of a book in these days?

"LITERARY BLASPHEMIES"

By—Ernest Boyd

This second specimen of modern syncopated criticism is more serious in intent and a bit more scholarly in style, but it attempts merely to do for the so-called classics of English literature what Trader Riddell has done for the moderns. Mr. Boyd is avowedly blaspheming the literary gods of the pedants, and to say the least, his blasphemy is fluent and effective.

Working on the assumption that the classics are usually spoiled for us by the adulations of old-maid school teachers and aged college professors, he attempts to give the views of "an intelligent, well read adult, who has so far evaded the classics," on the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens, Poe, Whitman and others.

Some of his observations are interesting, if not shocking, to the holder of the orthodox literary views. Milton, he asserts, "we can now freely describe as nothing more than a psychopathic Puritan...with the pigmentation of an albino...and the inhuman unreasoning temperament



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