

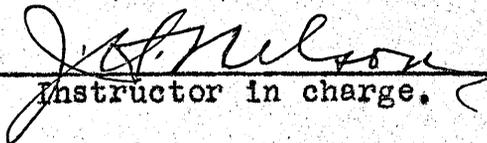
THE ESSAY IN AMERICA (1900-1925)

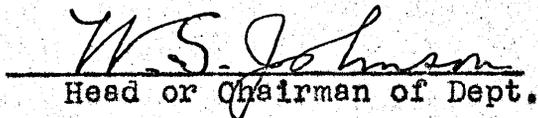
by

Mary C. Johnston, A.B., University of Kansas, 1931

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for the degree of Master of Arts.

Approved by:


Instructor in charge.


Head or Chairman of Dept.

October 3, 1932

To Professor John H. Nelson
whose kindly assistance
I deeply appreciate,
I dedicate my thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

In my study of the essay in America from 1900 to 1925, the first matter I had to take into consideration was the looseness with which the term "essay" is commonly used. Since the time of Montaigne, who is credited with having invented the term, the essay has been a vaguely defined type of literature. In my research, I found such authors of the twentieth century as Mary Austin, Gamaliel Bradford, John Dos Passos, Max Eastman, John Erskine, Frank Harris, Joyce Kilmer, John Livingston Lowes, Paul Elmore More, Meredith Nicholson, and Ida Tarbell called essayists. These authors are not, primarily, if at all, writers of the essay in the sense in which I shall use the term. Gamaliel Bradford, for instance, is a biographer and a historian. John Erskine, John Livingston Lowes, and Paul Elmore More are literary critics. Then again, in so-called collections of essays, one finds very often papers that are sketches, not essays. In other collections, excerpts from various books are labeled essays.

Hence, the vagueness with which the term "essay" is used, makes necessary a definition that will clearly explain what type of literature I have made the subject of my thesis. I shall not, however, attempt to give a definition that is my own. Rather have I tried carefully and consistently to

follow that which Professor R. D. O'Leary has set forth in his scholarly and thoroughly admirable book, The Essay. The first chapter, in particular, explains that literary types cannot be defined with scientific exactness, but that some approach to exactness is quite desirable and necessary.

This, therefore, is what I mean by the term "essay." An essay is a piece of literature written in prose. It is short, ranging in length from about one thousand to six thousand words. It has for its theme the general, the abstract, rather than the specific and the concrete. It is the product of observation and reflection. An essay records not experiences, but ideas about experiences. An essay is primarily literary, and not didactic. It may be a "veiled homily," but it does not attempt to preach or to have its suggestions for reform taken too seriously. The essay is a personal form, the expression of the writer's individuality and the result of his view of some phase of life. Therefore, an essay must have a style that is not merely matter-of-fact, as style in some other forms of expository writing may be. Alexander Smith was right when he said that on style the success of an essay depended. The number of subjects with which an essay may deal is almost infinite, provided, of course, that it has as

its theme ideas and not merely facts. Concrete examples may be used for illustrations, but they must not crowd out the idea.

The essay, unlike the short story, has no particular structure. It may even start out with one idea and end with another as far different and as far removed from the first as two ideas could possibly be. The easy change from one topic to another is known as discursiveness, a device of which Lamb was a master. The ideas of discursive writing are closely associated and transitions between them are, or should be, smooth and unobtrusive. The essay should develop in a logical manner, but its structure should not be obvious. The two chief ways of working out ideas are: first, to have a "leading predication," a central idea which is carried out to the end of the essay; and second, to have a "group compound," a well-rounded discussion of several phases of the chief topic. The most difficult aspect of the essay to explain and, at the same time, one of its most important phases, is tone. By this is meant the attitude of the essayist given not in the substance but in the manner of what he says. The variety of tones is infinite. Tone should be decided upon before writing an essay, and it should be consistent throughout the

essay. Since the essay is intended to entertain the reader, the humorous tone is more popular than the serious. The ideal essayist knows best how to combine humor with the proper amount of pathos, so that he will both please and touch the hearts of his readers.

Says Professor O'Leary: "Summing up, now, our completed description of the essay in its essentials, we may say that it is a short piece of prose, expository in general character, literary rather than matter of fact or didactic, and necessarily, therefore, in a style that departs somewhat from the level of plain assertion. Any piece of writing that has all these characteristics may with strict propriety be called an¹ essay."

The chief essayists of America in the twentieth century are, named in the order of the year in which their volumes of essays were published, Agnes Repplier, Edward Sandford Martin, Samuel McChord Crothers, Simeon Strunsky, Robert Cortes Holliday, and Christopher Morley. Because of the limitations imposed by my definition I have had to exclude John Burroughs, whose work is often essay-like but rarely in strict essay

1- The Essay, p. 28

form; George Woodberry, who was primarily a scholar; Henry Van Dyke, whose work is of a mixed sort; and numerous others who have written a few essays during the period - among them William Beebe, Charles S. Brooks, Heywood Broun, Frank Moore Colby, and Logan Pearsall Smith. Almost all the essays in these collections first appeared in magazines or newspapers. My study concerns itself not with all the essays written by these six authors, but only with those which have been collected and published in book form. Many of Miss Repplier's finest contributions to the field of the essay belong to the latter part of the nineteenth century. These I shall not discuss, since I intend to limit myself to the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The foremost essayists in America at the beginning of the twentieth century are Agnes Repplier, Edward Sandford Martin, and Samuel McChord Crothers. Miss Repplier, I should say, is the finest essayist of these three, and, in fact, the finest of all essayists in this century. She and Crothers show wide familiarity with literature, especially with a great deal of it that is today little read. These two write much about what they have read as well as what they have seen. Both, however, are extremely interested in problems of impor-

tance at the present time. E. S. Martin seems little concerned with literature, but writes much about questions of universal scope, such as marital relations and wealth. Hence, the first generalization one might make as regards this early group of essayists is that they are interested in important affairs of modern civilization; and, although they are subjective in as far as they give their personal reactions to these problems, yet they write, as a rule, on themes that are impersonal.

In tone, the essays of Miss Repplier and of Edward Sandford Martin are usually serious, the results of sober, earnest, penetrating reflection. Those of Crothers, on the other hand, though sometimes serious, usually show a great deal of genial humor, kindly laughter in the form of a personal anecdote or of a clever analogy between widely different things. All three authors reveal their outlook on life, and show themselves to be tolerant, broad-minded, sympathetic toward their fellow men. Crothers is the most charming writer of these three, and Miss Repplier, the most scholarly, the shrewdest critic of life and literature.

Simeon Strunsky might be called a connecting link between this early group and the younger writers, Robert Cortes

Holliday and Christopher Morley. In spirit, he is closer to the recent authors. Like them, he writes light, amusing essays, almost always humorous in tone. Yet he is more objective than they are. Like Crothers and Miss Repplier, he offers genuine criticism of some conditions existing today, especially in regard to the professions, as, for example, journalism. He reflects, as did the earlier of these two groups of essayists, on problems of real importance, but he puts his reflections, as do the later group, into the form of amusing and highly entertaining papers. Like E. S. Martin, he writes very little about literature, and almost entirely about people and institutions.

The essays of Robert Cortes Holliday and those of Christopher Morley are extremely personal. They show not so much what their authors think about life and literature as what they themselves enjoy doing. They write delightful little essays about their trivial occupations, but, as essayists, cannot compare in importance with the writers of the earlier group.

We must remember that Miss Repplier and Samuel McChord Crothers wrote volumes of essays throughout the first quarter of this century. These writers have been more prolific

than the younger ones in the field of the essay. The volumes by Holliday and those by Morley consist chiefly of sketches rather than of essays. The tendency has been, too, for the more recent essays to be shorter than those of the older writers in our general group of American essayists of the twentieth century.

In conclusion, then, I should say the essay of the twentieth century in America has developed in this way. Whereas the older essayists have tended to record their reflections on timeless, impersonal, or universal questions, the younger ones have usually written on subjective themes of trivial importance. All the older writers reveal much "high seriousness" both in subject-matter and in tone; the younger ones show lightness, humor, whimsicality. The older essayists are on the whole more intellectual, more scholarly; the younger ones, more light of heart, and to some people, perhaps, more entertaining.

THE ESSAY IN AMERICA (1900-1925)

EDWARD SANDFORD MARTIN

Edward Sandford Martin was born on January 2, 1856, at Willowbrook, Owasco, New York. He was graduated from Harvard University with an A. B. degree in 1877, and received an honorary A. M. degree from that university in 1916. He received the degree Litt. D. from the University of Rochester in 1917, and that of LL. D. from Lafayette College in 1924. In 1884, he was admitted to the bar in Rochester, New York. Two years later, he married Miss Julia Whitney. From 1883 to 1921, E. S. Martin was a member of the editorial staff of Life. For the past eleven years he has been the writer of the "Easy Chair" in Harper's Magazine. He lives now in New York City.

E. S. Martin has written only two volumes of essays, Lucid Intervals (1901) and In a New Century (1908). He shows from the very beginning his predominating interest in love, courtship, marriage, and children. Some remark as to the happiness to be derived from marriage and from children occurs frequently, and often a whole essay is devoted to one or more of these subjects. Being interested in children, Mr. Martin is, not surprisingly, concerned over the question of education and its problems. Moreover, unlike other well-

known essayists of America, he devotes considerable attention to the matter of wealth, and particularly to the ethics involved in the manner of acquiring and spending money. Throughout all of his work, the author gives evidence that his own ideals and standards of conduct are high, and that he believes in everyone's being as intelligent, as upright, as tolerant, and as helpful to other people as possible. His advice is not offensively didactic. Rather is it the expression of an admirable personality whose chief interest is the proper conduct of life, an interest that springs from the author's love of humanity and his desire to see it develop and perfect itself as best it can. Unlike his contemporaries, Crothers and Miss Repplier, he writes practically nothing about books, but chiefly about people, their pleasures, their duties, their aspirations. Like Crothers, however, he advocates facing the struggle of life with courage, joy, and hopefulness, and in making the most of our opportunities.

The first volume of essays by E. S. Martin, Lucid Intervals (1901), contains ten essays, all of which are quite readable. The first three, "Children," "Swains and Damsels,"

and "Husbands and Wives" indicate the author's interest in the family, especially in the American family. They present sensible views as to the question of marrying for money, as to the advisability of second marriages, and so on. The essay "Education" is excellent. The author realizes the fact that heredity and home training are the foundation of formal education, and do more to develop character than schools do. He urges upon college freshmen the importance of forming their own ideals of conduct and of maintaining their self-respect.

"Some Human Cravings" presents aspects of human conduct that Mr. Martin considers noble. For one thing, he says: "What we all should aspire to is to be just enough interested in ourselves to overcome our own sloth and get as much as possible of the good there is in us." He admires a combination of leadership and modesty. He objects to fits of bad temper, and urges the exercise of self-control. Altogether, this essay is well worth reading for the insight it gives into Mr. Martin's ideals. An essay useful for the purpose of discovering the author's attitude toward God and men is "A Consideration of Some Theologies." Mr. Martin says that God

1- Lucid Intervals, p. 146

permits but does not necessarily approve of the evils in this world. Nature destroys, and men must repair physical and moral deterioration. It is the business of people capable of caring for themselves to "take care of others and to labor for the diffusion of righteousness and the strengthening of human character."² In their work, however, people recognize their dependence on God, and "are conscious that our future greatness and prosperity depend upon our ability to shape our conduct in conformity with His will."³ Another commendable essay is "Times and Seasons," which discusses Lent and the things men should repent of, Easter and the reasons men have for being joyful and hopeful, Moving Day, an indication of human restlessness, Dog Days and the opportunities they offer for courtship, Thanksgiving and being thankful for the things that have been denied us as well as for what we have received, Christmas in discussing which Mr. Martin exhorts us to abandon "the prevailing tendency of our time and country toward too strait an individualism,"⁴ and to exhibit more brotherly love and good will. Every essay in the

2- Lucid Intervals, p. 191

3- Ibid., p. 199

4- Ibid., p. 233

volume is a serious presentation of the author's views on timeless, universal subjects that should interest everyone.

In a New Century (1908) contains twenty-one notable essays. At least five of these have as their theme some phase of the problems that arise in connection with money. These are "Proclivities and Compunctions," "The Impossibility of Living on Anything a Year," "Riches," "Character and Money," and "Speculation." Again and again Mr. Martin expresses the idea that the proclivity of Americans to get money, when the tendency is duly disciplined, is a wholesome thing, despite the jeers of Europe. Yet he believes that having enough money is as good as too much, and that spending what we have is sometimes wiser than saving it. He emphasizes the importance of acquiring and using money honestly. The best essay in this group is the one called "Riches."

"The Spiritual Quality" has as its theme the value of developing the character as well as the intellect at college. "Reading" and "Writing" are interesting essays, not strikingly original in the ideas they present, yet worthy of every reader's attention. One idea the author presents in the former is that "There is no intrinsic merit in merely reading books - even good books. What matters is what you get out

of them."⁵ In the latter, Mr. Martin discusses writing and its relation to remuneration. He says: "So long as you write the best you can it is no sin to take all you can gracefully get for what you have written."⁶

The most enjoyable essay in the collection, in my opinion, is "Exclusiveness," which contains the statement, "An exclusiveness that shuts us off from even an experimental knowledge of varieties of our fellow-creatures is neither conducive to our profit nor to our popularity."⁷ This essay gives the impression that is typical of Mr. Martin's writing, namely, that the world is a very interesting place, and that life is given men as an opportunity for righteous, courageous, hopeful, and joyous living.

Though he has not the geniality of Crothers or the breadth of interests that characterize the work of Miss Agnes Repplier, nevertheless E. S. Martin is a serious, high-minded, altogether pleasing essayist. Although his ideas tend at times too strongly in the direction of truisms, his work is always gracefully and urbanely literary.

5- In a New Century, p. 43

6- Ibid., p. 65

7- Ibid., p. 82

Samuel McChord Crothers

Samuel McChord Crothers was born in Illinois in 1857. At the age of seventeen, he was graduated from Princeton University, and then prepared himself for the ministry at Union Seminary. When twenty, he was ordained a Presbyterian minister, and went to Kansas, and later to Nevada. After two years he went to Santa Barbara, California, where he met and married Miss Louise Bronson. In the meantime he had become a Unitarian, and in 1882, he took charge of a New England parish in Brattleboro, Vermont. He went west again and organized Unitarian churches in Montana and on the coast. From 1886 to 1894, he was pastor of a church at St. Paul, Minnesota. From 1894 until his death in 1927, he was pastor of the First Parish Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

He began his series of essays with The Gentle Reader, published in 1903, and ended it with The Thought Broker, published posthumously in 1928. He wrote, altogether, nine volumes of essays. The papers in these volumes are strictly essays. Their purpose is to entertain, not to preach. Yet many of them contain not a little matter of the "veiled homily" type offering a bit of advice on loving one's fellow men, on being tolerant and patient with one's neighbor. No doubt, it was quite natural for Crothers to put ideas of this sort

into his essays as well as into his sermons. However, his essays are marked by much humor as well as a humanitarian spirit.

The humor is of a genial kind that is very charming. It is the kind that comes from a love for humanity, and from the sheer joy of living. Dr. Richard C. Cabot describes it thus: "His humor, which played forever around and through his thoughts on almost any subject, was especially of the warming and clarifying type, never biting or mocking, always affectionate and reassuring." ¹ And John Graham Brooks wrote: "Few men were ever a better illustration of what a natural and quite irresistible humor may do to soften and to enlighten our human judgments. . . . We cannot ever think of Dr. Crothers apart from humor." ²

Crothers has the true spirit of the essayist. He is thoughtful, intellectual, extremely interested in books and people. He seems thoroughly familiar with the Bible and with many of the literary works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He is especially interested in the personalities of the authors and of the characters. His last two or three

1- The Survey, LIX, 366 (Dec. 15, 1927)

2- The Survey, LIX, 536 (Jan. 15, 1928)

volumes of essays show an interest in contemporary events as well as in books and men. Dr. Richard C. Cabot says, "His astounding grasp of the past never weakened his hold on the present. . . . Through this double capacity for spiritual perspective and for the spiritual appreciation of current life he was able to reassure and to fortify, and to comfort an astonishing number of people through his sermons, through his books, and through his daily life."³

In his outlook on life, Crothers is decidedly hopeful. He is not blind to the evils of life, but believes in facing them courageously and striving to overcome them. He advocates taking the middle path between idealism and mere practicality. He is a lover of peace. He finds this world one of delight and romance, and expresses much joy in living. He shows kindness, tolerance, brotherly love, and faith in his fellow men.

The first volume of essays, The Gentle Reader (1903), shows Crothers's love of reading, especially books that are odd and little known today. He is more eager to know the personalities of the authors and of the characters than the ideas of the books. He shows no ulterior aims in reading. He

3- The Survey, LIX, 366 (Dec. 15, 1927)

merely wants to get into the spirit of the book and enjoy what the author thought and felt. He believes a reader's own judgment is alone sufficient to interpret any book.

A typical essay is "The Mission of Humor," which asserts that humor makes one have a kindly, gracious feeling toward mankind. Two other very pleasing essays are "The Honorable Points of Ignorance" and "That History Should be Readable." The former discusses some of the things that make for pleasant conversation. The latter requests that myths and fables as well as facts be included in histories. Finally, one essay that is especially delightful is "The Gentle Reader's Friends among the Clergy." It contains much of the geniality and humor that are characteristic of Crothers. Because of the ideas developed, and because of the light, humorous tone manifested throughout, this volume is one of the author's best.

The next collection, The Pardoner's Wallet (1905), contains eleven essays, which, according to the preface, "treat of aspects of human nature which, while open to friendly criticism, are excusable." The volume shows Crothers's tolerance and willingness to forgive trivial offenses. In the first essay, "The Pardoner," the author sets forth some small

sins that he thinks should be forgiven. This essay and "An Hour with Our Prejudices," which discusses the origin of and a possible remedy for some common prejudices, are typical of Crothers and illustrate his attitude toward men. Two very delightful, amusing essays are "How to Know the Fallacies," a criticism of modern education, and a burlesque of it by means of a cleverly worked-out analogy between logic and nature study; and "A Community of Humorists," which describes the broad type of humor to be found in a Nevada mining town. On the whole, though, this volume is less entertaining than The Gentle Reader.

By the Christmas Fire (1908) is the smallest volume in the group. It contains only five essays, but is not less significant than the other collections. As a matter of fact, some of the author's most characteristic ideas and attitudes appear herein. "The Bayonet-Poker" illustrates Crothers's belief in peaceful methods of settling disputes. "On Being a Doctrinaire" advocates moderation between excessive idealism and too great Philistinism. "Christmas and the Literature of Disillusion" sets forth the author's hopefulness, his courage, and his sincere faith in mankind. "Christmas and the Spirit of Democracy" pleads for charitableness. The

best essay is the one called "The Ignominy of Being Grown-up." In this Crothers laments the fact that adults lose the spirit of adventure that children have. He says: "What I object to is the fatalistic way in which people acquiesce in the arrest of their own mental development." ⁴ However, those who have creative ability, he believes, find life full of possibilities. Though small, this volume is important and enjoyable.

Among Friends (1910) begins with an essay on friendship. Other subjects that Crothers discusses here are education, books, politicians, youthful aspirations, and ethics. One of the best essays in the group of nine is "The Anglo-American School of Polite Unlearning." It describes a school in England where Americans go to rid themselves of their preconceived ideas about the English people. It is a mild satire on some of the chief faults of Americans. "The Convention of Books" illustrates what is known as the reverse method in essay writing. The books look out for the librarian instead of vice versa. A very genial, imaginative essay with an undercurrent of pathos is "My Missionary Life in Persia." It describes the longing of youth for adventure,

4- By the Christmas Fire, p. 153

and the thwarting of youthful aspiration by circumstance. The author's grandmother objected to his going to Persia; so he went to Kansas. One of the cleverest and liveliest of all Crothers's essays is the last one in the volume, "The Merry Devil of Education." I heartily recommend it to every reader. This book contains rather heterogeneous material, and the treatment of it ranges all the way from high seriousness to very clever geniality.

Humanly Speaking (1912) is one of the richest volumes of essays by Crothers. It is chiefly important in revealing the author's wholesome philosophy and sane, courageous outlook on life. He believes that the struggle to improve present conditions is stern and unrelenting, yet exhilarating. A delightful essay, full of personal anecdotes is "The Toryism of Travelers." An essay that shows an appreciation of Dickens and Crothers's joy in living is called "The Obviousness of Dickens." The material is very entertaining; the tone, very genial. The best essay in the book, in my opinion, is "The Spoiled Children of Civilization." Those who consider the struggle for the improvement of conditions futile are spoiled children. Crothers says that gloomy foreboding "should be dismissed, I think, as an indication of

childish unreason, unworthy of any one who faces realities." ⁵
Moreover, "The great commandment to the worker or thinker
is - Thou shalt not sulk." ⁶ This attitude is admirable, and
constantly recurs in the writings of Crothers. As I have
said, Humanly Speaking is one of the best volumes in the ser-
ies. The essays are all fascinating. They are more serious,
on the whole, than those in the other collections. They re-
veal extremely well Crothers's temper of mind.

The title The Pleasures of an Absentee Landlord (1916)
is misleading. It is appropriate for only a part of the
first essay. Two of the author's chief interests, books and
education, are the themes of most of the essays. In addition,
a new interest takes a conspicuous place in "The Taming of
Leviathan" and "The Strategy of Peace," which deal with con-
temporary affairs of national import. An essay that sets
forth admirably the author's tastes in literature and his
enjoyment of the past is "The Charm of Seventeenth Century
Prose." In "The Alphabetical Mind" appears a decidedly ori-
ginal treatment of the theme: openmindedness. The most en-
joyable essay in the book is "A Literary Clinic," which is
5- Humanly Speaking, p. 176

6- Ibid., p. 179

highly imaginative, very humorous, and wholly delightful. This volume has some important essays, but, I think, is less entertaining than some of the other volumes.

The Dame School of Experience (1920) contains essays that deal with aspects of education, with phases of human nature, and with the question of reconstruction following the World War. "An Interview with an Educator" is a clever discussion in dialogue form of what experience teaches. "Every Man's Natural Desire to be Somebody Else" is a topic which Crothers writes of with much understanding. This essay contains much humor, and is one of the most readable in the book. The author's characteristic tolerance and faith in men appear in "Natural Enemies and How to Make the Best of Them." "On the Evening of the New Day" shows Crothers's reaction to the conditions following the World War. He advocates cheerfulness, courage, and constructive thinking. Almost all the essays in this volume are enjoyable. Some are clever and humorous. Some reveal Crothers's tolerance, kindness, and courage.

The Cheerful Giver (1923) shows more interest in contemporary affairs than any of the earlier volumes. Among other things, Crothers discusses the new poetry and the new

biography. He also continues to take an interest in old books, such as those that interested John Wesley, and those that his own great-grandmother read. Other subjects that Crothers discusses are language study, history, "Institutions and Opinions," and morals. The most original and enjoyable essay in the collection is "Suggestions for the Establishment of a Constitutional Government in One's Own Mind." It contains good ideas, carefully worked out by means of an analogy between different kinds of minds and various forms of government. This book is one of the best by Crothers. Like The Dame School of Experience, it is more serious in tone than the earlier volumes. In it we see Crothers's interest both in old books and in contemporary affairs.

Samuel McChord Crothers is to be placed among the foremost essayists of the twentieth century. His essays are sometimes serious, sometimes delightfully humorous, always entertaining.

AGNES REPPLIER

Miss Agnes Repplier was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in April, 1858, and was educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Torresdale, Pennsylvania. She has traveled abroad a great deal, but rarely writes of her European experiences. She began her literary career with short stories for magazines. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, the editor of the Atlantic Monthly in the 1880's, urged her to write essays. During the past forty years, her work has almost entirely taken the form of the essay. She is today the foremost living essayist of America. An article in "Wings" for April, 1931, contains the statement: "Her work has met with ample recognition and when the distinguished and conservative National Institute of Arts and Letters elected to extend its boundaries to honor the women in America who were doing great work, Agnes Repplier was one of the first four women to be elected to membership." She has received the degree of Doctor of Letters, from the University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, Columbia University, and Marquette University. She was awarded the Laetare Medal by the University of Notre Dame in 1911. She is unmarried, and lives now in Philadelphia.

In a discussion of the essay in America in the first

quarter of the twentieth century, it is difficult properly to treat of Miss Repplier's work, for much of it was done in the later nineteenth century. She has written, altogether, ten volumes of essays, and five of these appeared before 1900. However, the same personality, the same fine characteristics, have dominated the essays on each side of the century line. The chief difference between the two groups, as I have divided them, is that the earlier essays deal almost always with some aspect of literary criticism, whereas the later ones show more interest in contemporary social life.

Miss Repplier's first volume of essays is Books and Men, published in 1888, and her latest is Times and Tendencies, which appeared in 1931. The author reveals herself as a person peculiarly suited to be an essayist. She is shrewdly observant, a careful reader of books and a keen spectator of men and events. She reflects penetratingly, seriously, tolerantly, and records her ideas and opinions wittily, at times even brilliantly. "Hers has been the important role of commentator on the unfolding drama of American existence, and she has played her part with intelligence and humor, innate good taste, and a subtle wit that penetrates more deeply than its broader relatives."¹

1- The Woman Citizen, XI, 16 (Aug. 1926)

The first impression her work makes is that the author is a woman of learning, culture, refinement, and good taste. Her essays abound in very apropos literary allusions to a great many authors in widely different centuries. Interwoven with all these references to the writings of others is Miss Replier's own comment, forcefully, fearlessly, and solidly expressed. "Her viewpoint has the distinguished feature of being at the same time conservative and original." Her work most satisfactorily meets Matthew Arnold's requirement of "high seriousness." It is extremely serious - sometimes, to be sure, sardonic - never light or gay. In this respect, it offers a decided contrast to the essays of Samuel McChord Crothers, almost all of which contain a good deal of genial humor. However, these authors are alike in their interest in books and contemporary events, and in their tolerant, broadminded, kindly, sympathetic attitude toward men. Miss Replier seems neither hopeful nor despondent as regards her outlook on life. She is keenly aware of the manifold problems of our complex civilization, advocates a knowledge of them, and herself faces them intelligently and fearlessly. Her contributions to the field of the essay are invaluable.

able by reason of the personality revealed, and the scholarly workmanship manifested.

In Compromises (1904), Miss Replier shows much interest in books. She not only writes about them, but constantly quotes from them. The essays are consistently serious in tone, and yet not too serious. On the contrary, in one of the best essays of the volume, "The Gayety of Life," the author sets forth her objections to people who call attention to the miseries of life. Like Samuel McChord Crothers, she condemns literature that is depressing. Every life, she insists, no matter how hard, has its compensations. "The sorrowful acceptance of life's tragedies is of value only when it prompts us to guard more jealously, or to impart more freely, life's manifold benefactions." Like Stevenson, the author realizes and appreciates the value of being gay, because of the influence gayety has on other people. Miss Replier shows a courageous outlook on life. She knows that gayety requires as much courage as endurance does. She is not the kind of person who is constantly rejoicing about the pleasure of living, but she believes in counting "only

3- Compromises, pp. 27-28

the hours that are serene." "The Luxury of Conversation" is an essay that shows the author's delight in good talk, and her belief that conversation is "our common debt to humanity."⁴ She disapproves of a talker like Macaulay who monopolized conversation and insisted upon imparting information many do not care to hear. In an age like our own, conversation ought to flourish, because the world is filled with countless interests. "Our Belief in Books" has as its theme the idea that books do not have so much influence on their readers as is generally supposed. "The Pilgrim's Staff" explains the romantic appeal of pilgrimages. "The Spinster" defends a life of "single blessedness" for women, and shows that such a life is not always or necessarily an unhappy one. Miss Replier at times shows an interest in gruesome things, as in "The Headsman" and "Consecrated to Crime." The latter ridicules tourists who delight in visiting places famous as scenes of atrocious crimes, and gullible enough to believe all the guides tell them about these places. The last paper, called "Allegra," is not an essay. It is merely the story of Lord Byron's daughter. The volume deals almost entirely with bygone generations or with

subjects that are timeless. Every essay is entertaining.

In the next collection, A Happy Half-Century (1908), which contains thirteen essays, Miss Repplier severely ridicules various forms of foolishness extant in the "happy" half-century (1775-1825). The book is valuable for the picture it gives of the social life at that time, and for the disclosure of the author's own modern attitude toward that kind of life. One ought to read every essay in the collection, in order to get a complete view of almost all the literary types that flourished then. However, the best essays, if one must make a selection, are: "A Happy Half-Century," which makes fun of the enormous fame of the mediocre writers of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the unwarranted praise given to them; "The Correspondent," which sets forth the author's objections to the length of the letters of that period, the moralizing in them, and the hyperbole in which they abound; "The Literary Lady," which ridicules the overpraised, petted women writers, who were supposed to be the caretakers of the morals of the people, and the inspiration, as well, of inextinguishable love; "The Child," which censures the severity of the education of children and the desire on the part of the parents to make prod-

gies of their children; and "Our Accomplished Great- Grand-mother," which satirizes the misdirected energies and the useless occupations of the women of the period. In "The Accursed Annual" appears a good summary of the period, and the qualities Miss Replier emphasizes throughout the volume, "Nothing recalls that faded past, with its simpering sentimentality, its reposeful ethics, its shut-in standards, and its differentiation of the masculine and feminine intellects, like the yellow pages of an annual."⁵ As far as unity of subject-matter and treatment of it are concerned, and as far as Miss Replier's rather sardonic attitude is concerned, this collection is the most significant that the author has written in this century. The essays are of the kind that appeal to persons specially interested in literature which, though not of intrinsic importance, is worth while for the light it throws on the social life of a certain time and place.

Americans and Others (1912) is not strictly a volume of essays alone. It contains several papers that have as their theme the particular, not the general. These belong to the field of narration and description, rather than to the field

of exposition. Hence they are not essays. However, a few of the papers are essays. These are: "A Question of Politeness," "The Mission of Humour," "The Nervous Strain," "The Girl Graduate," "The Estranging Sea," "The Temptation of Eve," and "The Benefactor." Because of the small number of essays, and the comparative unimportance of the ones that do appear, this volume does not rank so high as the others among Miss Replier's work. "The Mission of Humour" is one of the best essays in the volume. In material and in tone it offers a contrast to an essay of the same title by Samuel McChord Crothers. Miss Replier objects to the lack of good taste shown by Americans as regards the things we consider laughable. She voices, moreover, her protests against various other phases of our humor. Her ideas are quite sound; her objections, wholly fair and plausible. "The Temptation of Eve" should be mentioned, too, as worth reading. It has as its theme the effect of clothes on the social life of various periods.

Points of Friction (1920) is, in my opinion, the most important volume of essays that Miss Replier has written since 1900. It differs from the earlier volumes in that it discloses an interest in phases of contemporary life rather

than in those of previous generations. Every essay is a notable one. Each shows the author to be a shrewd observer, an original, painstaking thinker. "Living in History" shows the author's appreciation of the importance of knowing history. In "Consolations of the Conservative," we see that she believes in and advocates progress, and yet realizes the value of conservatism. "The Cheerful Clan" again sets forth the author's philosophy. She is too thoughtful to be an optimist, for she knows that optimism is blind and superficial. She denounces meaningless cheerfulness. She shows herself to be kindly, sympathetic with the woes of men, and intrepid in facing reality of any sort. "The Beloved Sinner" reveals a sane and by far the commonest attitude of people in general toward criminals. Miss Replier vigorously objects to the sentimental condonement of crime by some people. She believes in considering the security and welfare of law-abiding citizens. "The Virtuous Victorian" shows the author's admiration for reticence in literature. "Woman Enthroned" is a very sensible treatment of the question of the position of women at the present time. "Money" is a protest against the homage paid to wealth. The last essay in the book is especially fine. It is called "Cruelty and Humour," and shows how humor

is often but a form of cruelty. It reveals Miss Repplier's kindness, humaneness, and pity for the suffering. Altogether, this is an excellent collection, and contains essays that should please the most fastidious readers.

Miss Agnes Repplier is the outstanding essayist of America today. As a critic of literature, as an interpreter of contemporary events, as a serious-minded, scholarly writer of belles-lettres, she has no peer among American essayists of the twentieth century.

SIMEON STRUNSKY

Simeon Strunsky was born on July 23, 1879, in Vitebsk, Russia. He received his education, however, in America, at the Horace Mann School in New York and then at Columbia University from which he was graduated with an A.B. degree in 1900. For six years thereafter, he was on the editorial staff of the New International Encyclopedia. Between 1906 and 1920, he was an editorial writer for the New York Evening Post, and editor of this same paper from 1920 to 1924. Since that time he has been a member of the editorial staff of the New York Times. He lives now in New York City.

For several years, on Saturdays, in the New York Evening Post, appeared an essay under the title, "The Patient Observer" and later under that of "Post-Impressions." These essays have been collected into two volumes which bear the same titles, The Patient Observer (1911) and Post-Impressions (1914). The essays by Simeon Strunsky are short, light, and amusing. They show much freshness in subject matter and in point of view, a keen sense of humor, and considerable cleverness. In my opinion, he is the most entertaining of the essayists of America in the twentieth century. A review of The Patient Observer contains the statement: "There is

hardly an essayist of the present day in this country whose work seems better deserving of preservation."¹

He is quick to perceive absurdities in many features of present day civilization, and these he satirizes, not bitterly, but humorously. The chief objects of his ridicule are the professions, education, and the fine arts. Unlike the essayists of the earlier part of the century, he reflects not upon the past, its literature and social customs, but upon modern life as he saw it about him from the time of his graduation from college to the beginning of the World War. One reviewer wrote of him: "Mr. Strunsky observes admirably the interesting details of home life, married life, professional life, newspaper life, and above all of New York life."² "He is," said another, "a master of the whimsical, and very happy in presenting odd ideas with a touch of imagination and a pervading spirit of humor and friendliness."³

In form, his essays are different from those of most American essayists. Among the writers considered in this study, only he and Crothers use frequently the colloquy,

1- The Literary Digest, XLII, 901 (May 6, 1911)

2- The Bookman, LI, 66 (March, 1920)

3- The Outlook, XCVIII, 268 (June 3, 1911)

rather than the monologue. One of the best of Strunsky's colloquies is "Academic Freedom,"⁴ which makes fun of college entrance examinations.

The humor in Strunsky's work is neither the quiet, genial kind that is found in the essays of Crothers nor the whimsical kind that characterizes the writings of Christopher Morley; but it lies in exaggeration, in the combination within a sentence, or even a phrase, of incongruous ideas, and in absurd climax - the really funny things that make us laugh aloud. The following passage in "60 Horse Power" illustrates his humor: "It is evident that motor cars were intended for little boys who squeeze the signal bulb and stick nails into the tires; for Republican orators to cite as evidence that the American farmer does not want the tariff revised; for foreign observers to prove that we are developing an aristocracy; and for Tammany office-holders to snatch a bit of relaxation after the day's long grind,"⁵

People who read, as someone has phrased it, with their diaphragms only, might read the essays of Strunsky superficially and enjoy the cleverness of them without realizing the

4- Post-Impressions

5- The Patient Observer, pp. 286-7

actual criticism of men and modern customs that lies beneath the surface. In reality, though, his work is "intellectual burlesque with a sound basis of truth."⁶

The first volume, The Patient Observer (1911), contains thirty-four essays, a surprising number compared with the few to be found in any one collection of any other author in our group. They are all of about uniform quality, and reveal the chief characteristics of Strunsky's writing: humor, originality, cleverness. The main interests of the author seem to be the professions and the fine arts. One especially clever essay, "The Church Universal," has as its theme some of the absurdities to be found in some churches of the present time, such as the amusements the church furnishes in order to raise money, the subjects of sermons, and the interest of the clergy in politics. Four essays concern themselves with some phase of modern journalism: "Some Newspaper Traits," a satire on the way articles are written up and on the prevalence of articles about crime; "An Eminent American," a burlesque of interviews between famous men and reporters; "Headlines," which ridicules the confusing headlines that sometimes appear in newspapers, and "The Sample
6- The Bookman, LI, 66 (March, 1920)

Life," which makes fun of the falsehoods and idealization that characterize advertisements in magazines.

The best essays about the fine arts are "The Complete Collector-II " in which "the patient observer's "friend Cooper deliberately collects only fraudulent works of art, "Chopin's Successors," which satirizes the actions of audiences at musical recitals, and "The Children That Lead Us," which ridicules the use that is made of children in modern drama.

Other essays that should be recommended because of their humor and their genuine criticism of existing conditions are "The Mind Triumphant," in which literary contests are written up as if they were athletic ones, "Public Liars," on the incorrectness of public clocks, scales, thermometers, and weathervanes, "60 H. P.," which is an account of some typical situations involving motorists and pedestrians, and "The Irrepressible Conflict," which makes fun of woman suffrage. The only essay in which the tone is not light, but rather sombre is "The Cadence of the Crowd," which shows how the pathos and solemnity of crowds affect the author. Unlike Holliday and Morley, whose chief interests are men and books, Strunsky seems particularly interested in the absurdities

present in contemporary life. These he satirizes in a highly amusing fashion. Every essay in The Patient Observer is quite readable not only for the entertainment it affords, but also for the criticism it sets forth.

Post-Impressions (1914) like The Patient Observer contains thirty-four essays, not, however, quite so thoroughly entertaining as those in the first volume. Three essays concern themselves with journalism: "The Contemplative Life," which burlesques the criticism that some editors give to writers; "Different," which laughs at advertising; and "With the Editor's Regrets," one of the best essays in the book, which makes fun of editors's rejections of manuscripts. Other topics that Strunsky writes on are the invasion of science into the drama, women's fashions and shopping habits, art, architecture, questionnaires, the tariff, the subjects of lectures, the phonograph, realism, picture-shows, and education.

Five excellent essays have as their themes some phase of education: "Harold's Soul, II" on child psychology; "Rhetoric 21," an amusing indictment of the modern method of teaching English composition in college; "Academic Freedom," on grammar in college and on entrance examinations; "Ph.D.,"

on the subjects of research for doctors' dissertations; and "Two and Two," on the triteness of most commencement addresses. These are the most amusing essays in the volume and the most valuable, as well, because of their ridicule of real faults in our educational system. Finally, another essay that should be recommended for reading is "A Mad World," which discusses by means of a reductio ad absurdum alienists' examinations of criminals and the conclusions formed from them.

Post-Impressions contains essays that are always readable and entertaining, similar to those in The Patient Observer, but inferior to them in variety of interests and in the quality of the humor manifested.

Simeon Strunsky is second only to Miss Agnes Repplier among twentieth century American essayists. Like her, he is a critic of contemporary life, but writes about problems that are less important than those that she discusses. As far as entertainment is concerned, he is decidedly superior to any of the essayists discussed in this paper. Altogether, his work is always clever, pleasingly humorous, thoroughly enjoyable, a valuable contribution to the field of the essay.

ROBERT CORTES HOLLIDAY

Robert Cortes Holliday was born in July, 1880, in Indianapolis, Indiana. After graduation from the high school there, he was educated at the Art Students' League of New York between the years 1899-1902. During the years 1903-04, he attended the University of Kansas. Thereafter, he spent a year as an illustrator for magazines. Then for five years, he was a bookseller with Scribner's. During 1912-13, he was a librarian. On July 12, 1913, he married Miss Estelle Hickman. For the next five years, he held various editorial positions with New York publishers. In 1918, he worked as an associate editor of The Bookman, and a year later, became the editor of that magazine, and was contributing editor on its staff from 1920 to 1923. Since then he has been engaged in journalistic work in New York. Four years ago, he established the Robert Cortes Holliday School of Writing and Editorial Work. He lives now in New York City.

The essay work of Robert Cortes Holliday began making its appearance at about the same time as did that of Christopher Morley. The writings of the two men show that their interests, their way of looking at life, and their manner of expression are very much alike. Mr. Holliday reveals himself to be a person who thoroughly enjoys being alive. He is

interested in all that he sees, especially in the people who are engaged in various activities. He is, moreover, very fond of books. He likes both the city and the country. He delights, as does Christopher Morley, in watching the throngs of people in the city, in gazing at shop-windows, and in browsing in book-shops. But he also, like his fellow essayist, enjoys going for long walks in the country.

The work of these two authors is alike in subject-matter, which is decidedly trivial compared with the substance of the essays by Crothers or those by Miss Repplier. Holliday and Morley like to go about the city, observe all that interests them, and record their reactions in light, often humorous, always pleasing little essays. They do not endeavor to ridicule and to criticize as Strunsky does, nor do they attempt seriously to consider the important problems of modern life as Miss Repplier does; they merely chat informally with their readers on topics of interest to themselves. Mr. Randolph Bourne wrote of Mr. Holliday: "He seems to have no particular convictions, and he has not a touch of scholarliness. His motto is: 'It is a very pleasant thing to go about in the world and see all the people'."¹

1- The Dial, LXV, 419 (November 16, 1918)

Be that as it may, Holliday's essays have a charming quality that makes for entertaining reading. Christopher Morley wrote in regard to Walking-Stick Papers : "A garner of the most racy, vigorous, and genuine essays that this country has produced for some time. Walking-Stick Papers is a book you cannot afford to miss. In it you will sit down to warm your wits at the glow of an odd, delightful, unique mind."²

Walking-Stick Papers (1918), the first of Holliday's volumes, contains both sketches and essays. Of the twenty-four papers, ten are essays: "On Carrying a Cane," "On Going a Journey," "Going to Art Exhibitions," "A Roundabout Paper," "Why Men Can't Read Novels by Women," "Humours of the Book Shop," "The Deceased," "A Town Constitutional," "Reading After Thirty," and "On Wearing a Hat." "On Going a Journey" reminds one of Hazlitt's essay of the same title. It is light-hearted in tone, and expresses the author's sheer joy in being alive, in sharing the pleasures of the journey with a comrade, in talking or being silent, in walking or resting.

A typical scene in one of Holliday's favorite haunts, a
2- Boston Transcript, p. 7 (February 1, 1919)

book shop, appears in "Humours of the Book Shop." Its mild ridicule of various kinds of customers is amusing. Amusing, too, is the denunciation of modern novels by women writers in "Why Men Can't Read Novels by Women." Two essays that disclose the author's delight in observing people are "Going to Art Exhibits" and "A Roundabout Paper." The former shows that the author is as much interested in the people who attend the exhibits as he is in the art display; the latter starts out with a discussion of "bums," becomes discursive and gives some reflections on writing, and ends with a description of a typical street scene. The only essay that contains a note of sadness is "The Deceased," which contrasts the death notices in country newspapers with those in city papers. Holliday warmly approves of the kindness and tenderness that characterize the former. Two very entertaining essays are those which form the prologue and epilogue of the volume, namely, "On Carrying a Cane," and "On Wearing a Hat." Altogether, this collection of essays is wholly delightful, light, and amusing. It is the best Holliday has written, for it reveals much of the author's personality, his interests and pleasures.

Broome Street Straws (1919) contains seven essays that

have as their themes the same topics as those in Walking-Stick Papers: men, books, and city life. "Hunting Hack Work" is a serious treatment of some of the trials and tribulations a young writer has to endure. "An Article Without an Idea" is a satire on various types of literature. "What is a Library?" suggests the advisability of owning fewer books and having those few in fine editions. "To the Glory of Cities" is a satire, highly amusing, on the love of city life. Its tone is one of playful mockery, of gentle ridicule similar to that which often marks the work of Crothers. "Human Beings," which makes fun of the inability of some people to kill time and to overcome their dread of being alone; "Riding on Cars," which shows the author's keen interest in observing his fellow passengers on trains and street-cars; and "Folks That Rile Us," which describes typical trivial offenses that are forgivable but annoying, are essays which make it clear that Holliday takes much pleasure in being with his fellow men - and in ridiculing, not too severely, some of their faults.

This volume is thoroughly enjoyable. Difficult would it be to decide whether Walking-Stick Papers or Broome Street Straws is the more interesting. Both, of course,

should be read to understand and appreciate the author's sense of humor, his mild satire, his delight in men and books.

The last volume, In the Neighborhood of Murray Hill (1923), contains thirteen papers, six of which are essays. "New Ways to Live" shows the author's liking for common sense, the health, and the beauty that characterize present day civilization. Mr. Holliday is especially interested in the apartments and pent-houses of New York City. "With the Compliments of the Author" discusses two sides of the problem authors have to face when making presents of their own books. "New Day in Toydom" is an entertaining essay on the toys that children of today receive at Christmas. One of the finest essays in the collection is called "A Communicative World." It reveals the author's wide familiarity with literature, and his particular interest in books having a considerable element of autobiography. One is reminded of Crothers's intense interest in the authors of the books he read, their personalities and their feelings.

"The Day of Atmosphere Advertising" makes fun of the inappropriate application of culture to the field of advertising. Finally, "Well, Goodby - Enjoy Yourself!" gives whole-

some advice as to the best way of enjoying life, and leaves the impression that Mr. Holliday practices what he preaches in this matter. In regard to this volume, D. L. Mann wrote: "We confess that the personal note adds much to our enjoyment of it. It possesses also delightful variety. It seems to us - and we speak advisedly, having read all his books - the very best book Mr. Holliday has yet written,"³

That may be more or less true, if one considers the volume as a whole, but speaking only of the essays in the collection, I should say the two earlier volumes are the more readable. They have more humor, more vivacity than In the Neighborhood of Murray Hill, and seem to reveal more forcefully and more entertainingly the author's attractiveness.

Robert Cortes Holliday is, in my opinion, the least interesting and the least important of the six essayists treated in this study. He has, like Christopher Morley, written comparatively few essays, which, moreover, are not likely long to be remembered. The subjects of his reflections are not weighty. Though Mr. Morley may be said to deserve the same criticism, he has a charm of style, a whimsical turn of mind that Mr. Holliday lacks. To be sure, Mr. Holliday's

3- Boston Transcript, p. 3 (May 26, 1923)

interests in the world about him and his joy in living are worth sharing. However, he does not appeal to me so much as the other American essayists of the twentieth century.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Christopher Morley is not primarily an essayist. Rather is he a humorist, a writer of fiction, a columnist, and a writer of verses. Some of his work, however, happens to contain essays. Christopher Darlington Morley was born on May 5, 1890, in Haverford, Pennsylvania. Three years before, his father had come to America from Woodbridge, England, and had accepted the position of Professor of Mathematics in Haverford College. It was from this college that Mr. Morley was graduated in 1910. Then he spent three years as a Rhodes scholar at New College, Oxford. After returning to America, he was from 1913 to 1917 an editorial assistant on the staff of Doubleday, Page and Company. Then for a year he was on the staff of The Ladies' Home Journal, and later joined that of the Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger (1918-20). Afterwards, in 1920, he changed to the New York Evening Post, and stayed with that newspaper for four years. In January, 1924, Morley retired from active work for the newspapers to his home in Roslyn Heights, Long Island. He is married, and has four children. He is now a contributing editor of The Saturday Review of Literature. For the academic year 1931-32, he was appointed the Rosenbach Lecture Fellow in Bibliography at the University of Pennsylvania.

1- The Publishers' Weekly, CXIX, Part 2, 2527-28

The first striking feature of the essays by Morley is the subject matter; the triviality, the insignificance of the things about which he most frequently writes. He has not the intense interest in authors, books, education, and some of the large problems of living that Crothers had. He has not the serious observation and the keen insight into contemporary situations of national import that Miss Repplier has. Rather, Morley is the gay, light-hearted Epicurean among American essayists. He writes of his joy in smoking a pipe, of his pleasure in eating, of his delight in reading, and of his relish for living. Phases of domestic life, and the never-ending spectacle of humanity in its daily routine are the subjects of most of his reflections that have taken the form of the essay. His essays are exceedingly personal. The wistful, the humorous, the whimsical, and sometimes the rather sad moods of the author - all make their appeal to the reader. The author's heartiness, his enthusiasm, his affectionate love of men, children, and animals, his pity for his fellow creatures appear constantly in his work. His friend, H. S. Canby, wrote of him: "A man is not humorous - really humorous - because he wants to be; he may fabricate his wit, but his humor, as the medieval psycholo-

gist knew, comes from an excess of some quality seeking relief. The excess in Christopher Morley is love of living, and by a natural transference of interest, every manifestation of intense living in others. . . . But I think that the popularity of Christopher Morley is based upon a sound instinct for joy and pathos, sentiment and beauty in the nobler varieties of humanity."²

It seems almost impossible to read the essays of Morley and not be attracted to the author of them. Nevertheless, because he has written but few, and these, though entertaining, unimportant as to their substance, Morley cannot be ranked so high as the essayists in the earlier part of the twentieth century. He is not likely ever to have the fame of Crothers or of Miss Agnes Repplier in this field of literature.

Out of the fifty-two papers that comprise the volume, Mince Pie (1919), only eleven may be called essays: "On Filling an Ink-well," "Old Thoughts for Christmas," "Christmas Cards," "On Unanswering Letters," "A Letter to Father Time," "What Men Live By," "The Smell of Smells," "The Key-Ring,"
2- The Saturday Review of Literature, IV, 625-6 (Feb. 25, 1928)

"Our Mothers," "Truth," and "On Doors." The first one in this list shows the author in a wistful mood, reflecting on the fact that all books were born in ink-wells. "Old Thoughts for Christmas" reveals a heart full of peace and love. "On Unanswering Letters" has as its theme a typical case of procrastination that the author treats in a rollicking manner. "A Letter to Father Time" recalls Lamb's essay, "New Year's Eve," which expresses the author's love of the past and regret for the passing of time. Morley, on the other hand, sees the kindly aspect of Time's flight, and then becomes discursive and writes on the futility of New Year's resolutions. "Our Mothers" is a sweet and beautiful essay, sincere and not too sentimental. "On Doors" is a rather sad discussion of the significance of doors. All the essays in the volume are delightful and quite representative of the author as regards their themes and moods.

Like Mince Pie, the next collection, Pipefuls (1920) contains chiefly sketches. Only nine papers are essays: "On Making Friends," "Thoughts on Cider," "Safety Pins," "Moving," "Surf Fishing," "On Visiting Bookshops," "Fall Fever," "On Laziness," and "On Going to Bed." The first of these has as its theme the pleasure of friendship. It shows the

author's tolerance, and his affection for men. "On Laziness" is written in praise of doing nothing, and is reminiscent of Robert Louis Stevenson, one of Morley's favorite authors. "On Visiting Bookshops" is a thoroughly charming treatment of the tantalizing appeal of books. Every essay in the collection is highly entertaining, usually amusing, always characteristic of the author.

Plum Pudding (1921) contains among its "divers ingredients, discreetly blended and seasoned," as the sub-title assures us, nine essays, some of which are like those in the earlier volumes, trivial in substance, light in tone; and others which are serious. In the former group should be placed "Tadpoles," "Consider the Commuter," "Letting out the Furnace," "By the Fireplace," and "Thoughts in the Subway;" in the latter, "The Perfect Reader," "A Preface to the Profession of Journalism," "The Rudeness of Poets," and "The Permanence of Poetry." The former group consists of work which is clever and amusing. "Tadpoles" is especially so, and shows, moreover, Morley's fondness for children, and tenderness toward tadpoles. "Thoughts in the Subway" reveals the author's admiration of and his pity for his fellow men. "The Perfect Reader" is similar in its ideas to Crothers's

"The Gentle Reader." In each case, the author advocates reading for enjoyment only, not as a critic. "A Preface to the Profession of Journalism" offers some good, sensible advice to would-be writers. "The Permanence of Poetry" shows Morley's appreciation of the beautiful. It reveals what the author believes humanity values in poetry. "Humanity as a whole likes to make the best of a bad job; it grins somewhat ruefully at the bitter and the sardonic; but when it is packing its trunk for the next generation it finds most room for those poets who have somehow contrived to find beauty and not mockery in the inner sanctities of human life and passion."³ This volume seems to me the best of Morley's collections, for it contains both types of essays that the author writes: the serious and the humorous.

These three volumes, then, contain most of Morley's essay work. A book called Forty-four Essays by Christopher Morley, and edited by Rollo La Verne Lyman (1925), merely illustrates the looseness with which the term "essay" is used, for it is a collection of both sketches and essays from these earlier volumes.

Christopher Morley is a delightful essayist in his way.

He is light-hearted, jovial, untroubled, seemingly, by the real problems of life. His rather whimsical reflections are quite enjoyable, but probably will not long be remembered in connection with the noble field of the essay.

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