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Review of "What I Owe to Christ"

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The Hornbook is a literary magazine published by the Belles Lettres Society at Dickinson College between 1932 and 1962. For more information, please contact scholar@dickinson.edu.
"The Diversity of Life" by Calvin B. Bridges, and "The Weakness of American Criticism" by Joseph Wood Krutch. Mr. Krutch's thesis is, in brief: "The real weakness of American criticism lies not in any lack of enthusiasm, suggestiveness, or even brilliance, but in the sporadic, unstable, irresponsible nature of its enthusiasms; in, that is to say, the obviously adolescent character of its repeated conviction that it is mature at last."

It will be seen that The American Spectator ought to prove a journal of literary importance. Even though one may not sympathize with the popular, Menckenized, American Mercury note in it, one must admit that it represents the temper of the times. For that reason it is important and significant. At any rate, one must hope that it will continue to be as interesting and varied in the succeeding issues as it is in the first, and that the editors will not be forced prematurely to "retire to their estates."

C. R. T.


In this very readable book we have the story of one of the world's foremost Christians. It is the story of C. F. Andrews—commonly called "Christ's Faithful Apostle"—who is the only Westerner to become a member of the faculty of the International University of Rabindranath Tagore, world famous Indian Christian poet and philosopher. This bespeaks the broadmindedness of Andrews and his relation to the great leaders of India. In this lies much of the value of the book. Almost every chapter gives a miniature of some eminent personality. The author is possessed with the rather rare ability of a mystic to make intimate contacts and abiding friendships with great men. Through the author we are given portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, Mrs. Gandhi (who has suffered in the same cause as her famous husband), Tagore, Albert Schweitzer, Samuel Stokes, Sundar Singh, Mrs. Drew (daughter of W. E. Gladstone and deeply interested in the cause of the oppressed in Africa), and others of this type. Obviously a Christian missionary must be exceedingly broadminded and tolerant as well as amicable to win the friendship of such a diverse group of religionists. As we read the book we discover that his liberality in religion came as the result of a long and intense struggle with the conditioning of a secular, dogmatic, and prejudiced religious background. It is with a great price that he finally wins his emancipation from the shackles of a narrow religious training.

The book in spite of its autobiographical nature is simple, direct,
and sincere. Unlike many autobiographies the note of modesty persists throughout the whole story. As one reads the story of this cultured yet simple Christian, one is strangely reminded of the life of Saint Paul. The story presents a picture and a challenge. We have here the picture of a man who searches beneath the limitations of organized Christianity for a deep, abiding, and mystic friendship with Jesus, and finds the path of vicarious suffering to be the road to life abundant. We are confronted with a challenge that, shaking us from our modern religious complacency, bids us take New Testament religion seriously as this modern apostle is doing in India.

Some have predicted that this book will cause a "revival of primitive Christianity." Still others see it as an adventure in biography which is not surpassed by any other of its type. At least it can be ranked among the best religious books of the past decade and it gives promise of being one of the most read books of its kind for the year. It is particularly to the student of the psychology of religious experience that this book will appeal.

W. F. R.


This dizzying age of gin, jazz, mechanistic materialism, and sophisticated veneer has truly entered the field of art and we find our presses thundering day in and day out to saturate the already flooded book stalls with volume after volume of superficial trash. It is the product of the new age, we are told, bizarre, impressionistic, experimental.

It is reasonable to suppose that there are some things relative to art that must be held necessarily to a high standard at all times. One of these things is poetry. Matthew Arnold tells us that we should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. Certainly, not all poetic attempt approaches the standard of Arnold, but the tested poetry of an age does hold to a high requirement that gives it distinction and quality. Wordsworth has rather given us the high requirement suggested by Arnold when he says poetry is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." And this, combined with a discriminating observation of the mechanics of verse, gives us poetry capable of fulfilling high destinies.

But from the anthology, Manhattan Men, by Alfred Kreymborg, it is not wholly impossible to imagine that Mr. Kreymborg neither conceives of poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge", or attempts to give poetry even a place among the arts. For to believe his collec-