Norman, Hutchins, and William Hapgood were observers of, and to some extent participants in, many facets of American life from the late 1880s to the 1940s. Active in concerns ranging from journalism to industrial management, they achieved consistent first-rank significance in none of these. Norman Hapgood's major contributions were as a rather gentle muckraking journalist at Collier's and later as a Wilsonian spokesman at Harper's Weekly. Hutchins was primarily a cultural figure, author of books on turn-of-the-century society. William, the youngest, was a businessman who established a canning company run by his own employees.

Profiling three such diverse lives in a relatively short book would be a challenge for anyone, and there seems little justification for trying to place all three men in the framework of one essay. Each has his own points of interest, and they rarely coincide. Hutchins' intellectual and emotional life, Norman's journalistic career, and William's cooperative firm illuminate very different parts of American life in these years. Separate articles would have served each man more fairly and less confusingly.

Unfortunately, this volume further compounds its problems with structural and editorial shortcomings. It is poorly organized, shuttling from one brother to another and often leaving the reader confused as to who is under discussion. While clearly an intellectual biography, the book includes snatches of the brothers' personal lives inserted in an apparently random manner. Hutchins' wife is suddenly mentioned on page fifty-five although nothing has previously been said about her meeting with Hutchins or their courtship and marriage. Two flaws probably result from the book's origins as a doctoral dissertation. The volume is filled with exhaustive and unnecessary detail, as when the year-by-year vicissitudes of the canning industry are described. The work also consistently assumes too much knowledge on the part of the reader, for example, when a long list of Norman's associates on Collier's is given with no identification of the individuals (p. 79). More judicious editorial pruning would have resulted in a much better product.

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