authority on physiology—as, for example, on page 117 and on page 76—she quickly becomes absurd. And whenever she discusses the theories of rival birth controllers she descends instantly to the raucous, waspish manner of all earnest propagandists and uplifters, at all times and everywhere. As for the contraceptive device that she advocates herself, I suggest that the opponents of birth control print 10,000,000 leaflets describing it, and distribute them from end to end of the Republic. The result, if I do not err, will be a doubling of the birth-rate within one calendar year—and the adoption of the name of Stopes for scaring children.

H. L. M.

Three Volumes of Fiction

HORSES AND MEN, by Sherwood Anderson. New York: *B. W. Huebsch.*
THE ROVER, by Joseph Conrad. Garden City: *Doubleday, Page & Company.*
A LOST LADY, by Willa Cather. New York: *A. A. Knopf.*

SHERWOOD ANDERSON dedicates his new book of short stories to Theodore Dreiser and prints a short but eloquent hymn to the elder novelist as a sort of preface. A graceful acknowledgment of a debt that must be obvious to every reader of current American fiction. What Dreiser chiefly contributed to the American novel, next after his courageous destruction of its old taboos, was a sense of the tragedy that may play itself out among the lowly. The lowly, of course, had been familiar figures in our fiction for many years; the most popular of all American novels of the middle period, indeed, had had a hero who was an actual slave. But even the authors of text-books of literature for undergraduates must be aware by this time that Mrs. Stowe never actually saw into the soul of Tom—that she simply dressed up a dummy and then somewhat heavily patronized it. The same patronage continued unbroken until Dreiser wrote "Sister Carrie." In that book, for the first time, a girl of the Chandala suddenly became real. Dreiser did not patronize her in the slightest. Instead, he tried to see her exactly as she was, to understand her secret soul, to *feel* with her. It was a new kind of novel among us, and after the Comstocks, the college tutors and other such imbeciles had tried in vain to dispose of it, it began to have an influence. Today that influence is visible in stories as widely different otherwise as Miss Cather's "My Antonía" and Anderson's "Many Marriages," Tarkington's "Alice Adams" and Elliot H. Paul's "Impromptu."

"Horses and Men," indeed, is largely a set of variations on Dreiserian themes, though mere imitation, of course, is nowhere visible. The book represents a sort of reaction from the elaborate and often nonsensical psychologizing of "Many Marriages." In other words, Anderson here returns to earth—specifically, to the rural Ohio that he knows so well, and to the odd, pathetic peasants whose aspirations he sees into so clearly. I put the first story in the volume, "I Am a Fool," beside the most esteemed confections of the day, and call confidently for judgment. If it is not enormously better than anything ever done by Katherine Mansfield, Arthur Machen or any other such transient favorite of the women's clubs, then I am prepared to confess freely that I am a Chinaman. There is a vast shrewdness in it; there is sound design; there is understanding; above all, there is feeling. Anderson does not merely tell a story; he evokes an emotion, and it is not maudlin. So in "An Ohio Pagan," a story scarcely less adept and charming—the tale of a simple youth to whom going to school is a tragedy almost as poignant as the nationalization of men would be to an archbishop. And so, too, in "The Sad Horn Blowers," in "Unused," and in "The Man's Story." These are short stories of the very first rank. They are simple, moving, and brilliantly vivid. Another such volume and all of us will begin to forget the Wisconsin washing-machine manufacturer and his occult posturing in the altogether.

Mr. Conrad's "The Rover" contains in-

dications that he has profited by the adverse criticism which began to rise against him in England two or three years ago. For a long while he had been accepted as a sort of overwhelming natural phenomenon or act of God, above and beyond ordinary criticism. Then a few anarchists began complaining that he was, after all, a bit too careless of design—that his great romances would be even greater if only he could be induced to articulate them more deftly. In "The Rover" there is an unmistakable improvement in this department. The story has a beginning, a middle and an end; it moves smoothly and logically; it is nowhere discursive or obscure; in truth, it is almost well-made. Personally, I was quite content with the garrulous, wandering, absent-minded Conrad of "Nostromo" and "Chance"—it seemed to me, indeed, to be foolhardy to risk alarming him by challenging him, as it was foolhardy to alarm Beethoven by suggesting that he change his shirt—, but now that the business has been dared and its effects are visible, I believe that there will be a measurable increase in Conradistas. There is nothing in "The Rover" to daunt the most naïve novel-reader. It is a simple story, very simply told. It has a good plot, plenty of suspense, and what the idiots who presume to teach short-story writing call rapid action. In brief, a capital tale, done by a great master. Scene: the south coast of France. Time: the year before Trafalgar. Hero: a retired French pirate who dies magnificently in an enterprise against *perfide Albion*.

Miss Cather's "A Lost Lady" has the air of a first sketch for a longer story. There are episodes that are described without being accounted for; there is at least one place where a salient character is depicted in the simple outlines of a melodrama villain. But this vagueness, I suspect, is mainly deliberate. Miss Cather is not trying to explain her cryptic and sensational Mrs. Forrester in the customary omniscient way of a novelist; she is trying, rather, to show us the effects of the Forrester apparition upon a group of simple folk, and particularly upon the romantic boy, Niel Herbert. How is that business achieved? It is achieved, it seems to me, very beautifully. The story has an arch and lyrical air; there is more genuine romance in it than in half a dozen romances in the grand manner. One gets the effect of a scarlet tanager invading a nest of sparrows—an effect not incomparable to that managed by Hergesheimer in "Java Head." But to say that "A Lost Lady" is as sound and important a work as "My Antonía"—as has been done, in fact, more than once in the public prints—is to say something quite absurd. It is excellent stuff, but it remains a bit light. It presents a situation, not a history.

H. L. M.

The Chicago Outfit

MIDWEST PORTRAITS, by Harry Hansen. New York: *Harcourt, Brace & Company.*

THE appearance of this very serious tome probably marks the passing of the movement with which it deals. The center of literary gravity in the United States has hovered over Chicago since the Columbian Exposition of 1893, which taught the natives not only table manners but also connoisseurship. But now that most elusive mathematical point seems to be preparing to wander again, and just which way it will go no man can say. It may come eastward, to the New York that held it between the downfall of Boston and the rise of Chicago. It may move further West, though never, I am sure, as far as the Coast, where Methodism now makes all the fine arts impossible. It may even go southward. But that it will remain where it is seems highly improbable. For Chicago, running out of ideas, has begun of late to take refuge in postures, and so it tends to repel the young artist and to attract the young mountebank. The literary circle that Mr. Hansen describes is already almost indistinguishable from that of Greenwich Village. It has its Great Men, many of them bogus; it has its whips and arbi-