

remarkable clarity and force. Hamilton emerges from it as a statesman of the very first magnitude, and also as a man of great romantic appeal as well as of some rather grave human frailties. There are so many excellent points to this biography that it is difficult to single out any one; but perhaps special mention should be made of Mr. Schachner's treatment of *The Federalist*; it is a little masterpiece of objective exposition. A good bibliography and index are appended.

FROM THE BANKS OF THE VOLGA. The Life of Maxim Gorky, by A. Roskin. \$2.00. *Philosophical Library*. This book was first published in Russia last year. It contains nothing that has not appeared elsewhere, and the writing, at least in the translation by D. L. Fromberg, is very jerky. There is one reproduction of a painting by V. Yefanov that will come as something of a surprise to most students of Russian literature. It portrays the ill Gorky surrounded by three men who have hitherto kept their interest in literary art in the background — Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov.

BEATRICE WEBB, by Margaret Cole. \$3.00. *Harcourt, Brace*. Mrs. Webb (1858-1943) was one of the most remarkable women of modern times. Along with her husband, Sidney Webb, she was one of the most profound economists of our day and her contributions to liberal philosophy are of the first magnitude. Her major error, made late in her life, was in being taken in by the bogus Soviet democracy, but even that was more an error of the heart than of the head. Mrs. Cole's biography is far from impartial; it is rather an appreciation, and as such is a valuable volume.

POETRY

DUBLIN POEMS, by Seumas O'Sullivan. \$2.00. *Creative Age*. Mr. O'Sullivan is one of the most lyrical and moving of all living Irish poets. He sings the sad moments and the mounting regrets of life. He is most at home at twilight and in the shadows of dreams and hopes. Indeed, the best section in this excellent book is entitled "The Twilight People." Perhaps the other Irish poet most like him in poetical impulse is the James Joyce of *Chamber Music*, though O'Sullivan is a bit more expansive and he is not afraid of using a

small symphony on occasion. There is a brief introductory note by Padraic Colum.

AGAINST THE CIRCLE, by Brewster Ghiselin. \$2.00. *Dutton*. Mr. Ghiselin, one of the younger poets with something of a reputation in poetical circles, obviously has something to say, but he strains so hard for images and has so feeble a command of metrical form that hardly any of his verses really succeed. Even "Bath of Aphrodite" and "Summer Noon," perhaps the best in the volume, wobble here and there for sheer lack of complete intelligibility.

MY TALON IN YOUR HEART, by Nancy Bruff. \$2.00. *Dutton*. Miss Bruff, author of the "novel" *The Manatee*, has literary passion of a sort, but it is immature or merely "intense." Here, for example, is the first half of "Dainty Prison": "A Young girl is a porcelain stove/ Containing flame / When she would utter passionate words / Revealing her unique, her only self / She says breathless and / Conventional nothings."

FICTION

IVY GRIPPED THE STAIRS AND OTHER STORIES, by Elizabeth Bowen. \$2.50. *Knopf*. The twelve stories here all deal with wartime England, but they are not "war stories" in the accepted sense. The war is nearly always in the background, as one of the ultimate reasons for the pathologic cheeriness of this character or the flood of introspection coming over another. Love, hate, futility, and despair are all personified here, but it is difficult to say that any one of the tales really establishes a vitality of its own. Part of the blame can perhaps be found in Miss Bowen's stilted language: "Maria gave Henry an askance look. . . . At an unintimate distance along the passage. . . . Ivy gripped and sucked at the flight of steps, down which with such a deceptive wildness it seemed to be flowing like a cascade." (Some critics, strangely enough, have called this sort of language style.) Another reason for the failure of these stories is Miss Bowen's apparent unwillingness to dig very deeply into her characters. She seems to think that to portray confusion in a person's heart is to say something very profound about that person.

THERE WERE TWO PIRATES, by James Branch Cabell. \$3.00. *Farrar, Straus*. This is a retelling, with some alteration, of the commercial and love affairs of a Spanish pirate who did business in and around Florida a long time ago. One wonders why Mr. Cabell bothered. Here are displayed again many of the author's old devices, the old burnished prose which frequently slips into super-elegance, the old fondness for elevating a story of various kinds of violence onto a level of romantic elegance — and to what point it would be difficult to imagine. What Mr. Cabell has to say in these 121 pages he has said a number of times — and much more effectively than he has here. John O'Hara has most fittingly designed and illustrated the book: which is to say, he has over-decorated it in a much-ado-about; nothing, decoration-for-its-own-sake style.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THE NUREMBERG TRIAL AND AGGRESSIVE WAR, by Sheldon Glueck. \$2.00. *Knopf*. The professor of criminal law and criminology at Harvard is here concerned chiefly with the problem of the legality of the trials of the war criminals of World War II. He delves deeply and with vast learning into the relevant precedents and comes to the conclusion that "the waging of an aggressive war is not only unlawful but also criminal, and that there is nothing fundamentally 'retrospective' or unjust either in recognizing this fact or in holding individual members of a government personally liable for criminal acts committed in the name of the state." There is a foreword by Justice Robert H. Jackson, United States chief of counsel at the Nuremberg trial.

THE FUTURE IN PERSPECTIVE, by Sigmund Neumann. \$3.50. *Putnam's*. Here is a good brief rehearsal of the history of our times, beginning with World War I. It describes this period as a Second Thirty Years War, with nationalism and social revolution substituted for the religious conflict of the First. Mr. Neumann successfully reveals a developing pattern in the story he has to tell, and he tells it in a manner refreshingly free from dogmatism of any kind, though one might object that his tone is more cheerful than a sharp look at the current international scene would seem to warrant.

MISCELLANEOUS

A BOOK ABOUT A THOUSAND THINGS, by George Stimpson. \$3.50. *Harper*. This is one of the most extraordinary and fascinating books published in years. It is a grab-bag of information on almost all topics under the sun (and beyond). Here, for example, are some of the topics discussed: Is it improper to wash a United States flag? What country was moved on the map from South to North America? Why is a horse called "dobbin"? What was the big wind of Ireland? What causes the ticking sound in wood? How is "Eyre" pronounced in *Jane Eyre*? Why do gunners open their mouths when firing cannon? The book seems to have no scheme of organization, but perhaps that is one of its additional virtues. It is perfect reading at any time when one feels intellectual in, so to speak, a non-intellectual way. The only trouble is that if one dips into it at bedtime one is likely still to be reading it when the milkman makes his rounds.

KEEP IT CRISP, by S. J. Perelman. \$2.50. *Random House*. It's no good putting Mr. Perelman down as simply a humorist, even as a very good humorist: this latest collection of satires, burlesques and other exercises of Perelmanism adds up to incisive and frequently devastating comment on social and cultural aspects of our times. The aim, to be sure, is always primarily to amuse, but the results are educational as often as not. This volume includes pieces on American advertising, high-toned movie criticism, the tough-and-rough school of detective-story writing, radio advice programs, women's magazines, etc., etc. The level is uniformly high.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN READER, edited by Ray B. West, Jr. \$3.50. *Dutton*. This is a collection of thirty-eight essays, stories, and poems dealing with the Rocky Mountain region — Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming and Colorado. Except for the poems, which are feeble, the book makes informative and dramatic reading. The editor's introduction is a brief literary history of the region and is a model of such writing. Mr. West is co-editor of the *Rocky Mountain Review*, one of the most lively and best edited of the "little" magazines.