

stories by de Maupassant myself; but I mercifully forebore. The thought came to me that my version would be of the "there or thereabouts" variety, and we have quite enough of these. I do not know if the Knopf version will be issued by an English house, and I have not seen it, but there is a distinct opening for such a set. For one thing, it would enable people whose French is shaky to decide whether the palm for short stories should go to de Maupassant or to Chekhov. I have no doubt myself, but I have seen startling things upon this point, and it would carry the debate into open country, at least. That it will ever be settled, I do not for one minute suppose. Such things are not to be settled, except for the individual. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that I think Chekhov incomparably the greater man, there is not a doubt in my mind that there were some things in which de Maupassant could give Chekhov points. I will go no further than that, for I consider Chekhov one of the greatest men who have ever sought to represent human nature in the form of prose fiction.

These notes will appear, I suppose, in the January number of *THE BOOK-MAN*. I wonder what the New Year holds for us. Has it a great novel? Another book by Lytton Strachey? A supreme poem? A fine piece of nonsense? I would give a good deal for a fine bit of nonsense. The Strachey book I do not suppose possible, and in fact the rumors as to the subject of Strachey's next work have died away into a sort of vague murmur. And what of novels, poems, plays? Who can tell? These are times when all three might suddenly appear. I do not know any young person who might be capable of starting a surprise; but there may well be such. And I may say that I have just been reading a book called "The Undertaker's Garland", published in the United States by two young men who appear to be under thirty years of age; and if this sort of thing — for the book contains exceptional work — is possible I am quite content to believe that the necessary books for our dreams will come sooner or later from America.

SIMON PURE

FOR WE HAVE TOYED WITH BITTERNESS

By Joseph Auslander

FOR we have toyed with bitterness:
The jeweled hilt, the flaming edge;
And we have made a daggered pledge,
And we have kept it pitiless.

How tame, how frantic this pretense,
How infantile this give and take,
When, by a whisper, we might wake
The starved lips and the cheated sense!

BROADWAY, OUR LITERARY SIGNPOST

By Kenneth Andrews

A PERSON who sees nothing in Mr. Galsworthy's "Loyalties" but an exciting melodrama well told, who is unable to accept with proper reverence the awesome allegory of "R. U. R.", who despite the huzzahs of his betters finds nothing in "The World We Live In" but a nursery fable putting on insufferably pretentious airs, may eventually come to the point where he must search his soul and ask himself each night, after doing his Coué, if he is unable to appreciate the finer things.

Then comes a play like "Rain" to revive in him the assurance and bigotry which are essential in a critic. This play reminds one that art, on the stage or anywhere else, vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up. It reminds one that if a play is created with sincerity and faithfulness to life it cannot fail to make some more or less worth while comment on human nature, and that the broader aspects of any drama must be implied and not megaphoned from the footlights. In short it refreshes one's conviction that the truest art is unself-conscious. If a person insists on going to the theatre to be improved, rather than to be entertained, it is the play which, within the limits of sound dramaturgy, truly reflects life that will serve him.

When you compare "Rain" with "The World We Live In", for instance, you realize indeed that illusion is the soul of drama. A play, no matter how profound its purpose, must create be-

lief before it can stir the emotions; and until it does this it must fail in its purpose. In "The World We Live In" we are told repeatedly that we are in the presence of colossal allegory. The meaning of life and death, so announces a loquacious character, will be explained by the incidents on the stage. But we don't believe him. We believe only what we see, and we see some actors in fantastic costumes enacting the most obvious sort of bed-time story. There is little, really, to stir the imagination despite the floridly imaginative theme of the playwright. The very scheme of the drama enforces detachment on the spectator; he may be impressed but he is not stirred. His emotions are cold because nothing on the stage occurs to rouse his sympathy or hatred. The play is as impersonal as a commencement dance by the senior girls of a fresh water college. Only as spectacle has it theatrical value, and with "The Music Box" and "The Follies" in town, New York has expensive tastes in spectacle.

The episode of the ants is designed, and doubtless accepted by many, as a terrific indictment of war. But what does this indictment of war consist of? What is it that actually comes over the footlights? We see twenty or thirty supers in uniforms vaguely suggesting those worn by the recent enemies of civilization. These young men march across the stage, around behind the backdrop, and across the stage again — and again and again.