

THE EDITOR RECOMMENDS —

BOOKS THAT MAY HAVE ESCAPED YOU

"Ulug Beg" — this long satirical poem by Leonard Bacon is topnotch if you enjoyed "Don Juan". If you don't like satirical poetry, avoid it.

"Mårbaka" — Selma Lagerlöf's autobiographical narrative has beauty and tenderness.

"Raw Material" — a collection of Dorothy Canfield's sketches, in which she does some of her very best writing.

"Yankee Notions" — New England poems of wisdom touched with humor. Written by G. S. B., famous to readers of "The Conning Tower".

"Beggars of Life" — Jim Tully's story of tramping days has recently appeared in England. It is, perhaps, a book for men.

Defeated Love

THERE are several reasonably new novels that would be included in this department had they not been capably reviewed elsewhere in the magazine. Of these, I should like to mention "Arrowsmith", Sinclair Lewis's best novel, in my opinion; Ellen Glasgow's lovely "Barren Ground"; the already much discussed "Constant Nymph"; and Maugham's "The Painted Veil". All of them are worth a first reading, and some of them, a second.

Donn Byrne has added another short novel to the distinguished list that includes "Messer Marco Polo" and "Blind Raftery". "O'Malley of Shanganagh" (Century) is a technical performance of rare skill. It shows an

old broken man, in various moods of forgetfulness and keen remembrance, and at the same time pictures the reasons for his breaking. The theme of the story is the old one of spiritual and physical love in conflict, of the world struggling in the mind of a girl against her vision of heavenly bliss. Perhaps there is not so much beauty of phrase and of conception as in other stories of Mr. Byrne's, but he has given us two characters of power and clarity. He is always interesting, and, in this case, unusually tender. De Bourke O'Malley is a dreamy figure, but nevertheless a real one. He is as moody as the moodiest Irishman, and so is Sister Ursula who dared Heaven and reaped her reward in unhappiness for herself and her lover. No single picture in the book is quite so fine as that of Dublin in the early pages, a Dublin where old men sit in corners, forgotten and sad old men, happy in their barroom moods, and accepted for what they are, with no attempt to lift the whiskers and pry out a former existence. They are good drinking companions — what else matters?

Genius Mapped and Charted

CARL VAN DOREN is a critic who is very sure of his own judgments, as what critic worth his salt is not. He believes thoroughly in James Branch Cabell's genius, and tells why clearly and with a deal of information in the first of the series called "Modern American Writers" (McBride). Perhaps the most interesting thing in the book,

although the text is lucid and useful, is the Map of Poictesme contributed by Mr. Cabell himself. For admirers of this land it will be indispensable, at least if admirers of so glamorous a place happen also to be literal minded. Is it not curious that in an age so free from chivalry, its greatest exponent should be as popular as is Cabell? Take a passage from "Chivalry" which Mr. Van Doren quotes:

The cornerstone of Chivalry I take to be the idea of vicarship: for the chivalrous person is, in his own eyes at least, the child of God, and goes about this world as his Father's representative in an alien country. It was very adroitly to human pride, through an assumption of man's responsibility in his tiniest action, that Chivalry made its appeal; and exhorted every man to keep faith, not merely with the arbitrary will of a strong god, but with himself. There is no cause for wonder that the appeal was irresistible, when to each man it thus admitted that he himself was the one thing seriously to be considered. . . . So man became a chivalrous animal; and about this flattering notion of divine vicarship builded his elaborate mediæval code, to which, in essentials, a great number of persons adhere even nowadays.

This series should be more than useful. Already five titles are announced: besides the Cabell volume, there will be "Edith Wharton" by Robert Morss Lovett, "Edwin Arlington Robinson" by Ben Ray Redman, "Theodore Dreiser" by Burton Rascoe, and "H. L. Mencken" by Ernest Boyd, who edits the series.

Memorable Portraiture

THOMAS BOYD'S war masterpiece, "Through the Wheat", has reached its seventh edition, and will go on being read as long as the last war is remembered. His "The Dark Cloud", a story of a boy in the days of the underground railroad, is a good piece of work. It missed being a topnotch story be-

cause it lacked the very thing which made "Through the Wheat" so fine — biting, quick characterization and brief but uncommonly exact description. Do not let me lead you away from "The Dark Cloud", for it is an excellent novel. "Points of Honor" (Scribner), a collection of soldier sketches, is in its way better than "Through the Wheat". The long story showed many viewpoints, but it was written in more or less the same mood. In this later collection Boyd has preserved his humor, his savagery, his incisive picturization; he has allowed himself varied attack, as in "The Kentucky Boy" and "Rintintin". He is an abler chronicler of the war than Laurence Stallings because he is less personal; his bitterness is tinged by even more of kindly memory than is present in the soul of the man who wrote "Plumes" and furnished the atmosphere for Maxwell Anderson's "What Price Glory?" A college boy said to me the other day, "I feel as if my whole philosophy were built on a premise of the war, yet I know nothing about it." He can scarcely do better than take "Points of Honor" as a text. Here he will find beauty and passion, gall and Rabelaisian humor. He will see men in fiction who were the college boys of only ten years ago. He will understand the war generation. Boyd can use the American language with telling effect. He writes of canteen and camion, of French girl and American sweetheart, of officers and of men. He is not sentimentally a worshiper of his heroes, nor does he waste time deploring war. His stories are of men under a special set of conditions; but primarily of men. "Points of Honor" is a book that I hope every reader of this magazine will read. I should like to quote Boyd's entire foreword, but I am going to give you only the final paragraph:

These stories are not inventions. (For of heroes I knew many: Dan Daly, Macon Overton, W. F. Kahl, Gerald C. Thomas, Edward R. Stone, Berton W. Sibley, Fred Morf, Gunner Burns, John A. Hughes, Jeremiah Dalton, William Winter Dean, Earl Ryan . . . and of cowards not a few.) Neither are they — except in the case of “Semper Fidelis” — factual transcriptions, but rather tales of human deeds and emotions which were acted and felt either in the heart of war or beneath its long and lasting shadow.

Poetry of Wistful Maturity

IN “The Poor King’s Daughter” (Doran) Aline Kilmer writes in lyrics both poignant and intellectually satisfying what might almost be an entire novel. It is the story of a wife and mother, looking about at the world of middle age with tolerance and amusement, but with wistfulness. It is the story of a woman’s awakening love, and a mother’s love tinged with irony. Mrs. Kilmer has written graceful poems before, and some of them were a trifle sentimental; but in this new volume she seems to me to become suddenly vastly more important as a poet. “For the Birthday of a Middle-Aged Child” is perfect for what it is. In a thing like “Prelude” her rhythms are lovely, her ideas take on the glamor of the unusual. Perhaps the whole story of the volume is told in “Dispersal”. In my opinion, this book places her in the same class as Miss Millay in the ranks of the writers of love lyrics.

DISPERSAL

What will become of me now I am dead?
For my heart divided and went two ways,
Devil-driven, angel-led,
Bewitched, bewildered all my days.

Angel from fiend I cannot tell,
Twin shapes, alert, intent to fly;
One goes to Heaven, one to Hell,
And I — I know not which is I.

Intimate Biography

IN “Lives and Times” (Putnam), the author of “The Fabulous Forties” writes four short biographies of early Americans: Theodosia Burr, Edmond Charles Genêt, Stephen Jumel, and William Eaton. They are human, unhampered by hero worship, and give an interesting picture of the background of those parlous times. If I miss the sparkle of the earlier volume, it is perhaps simply because that book was so amazingly good that Meade Minnigerode will have difficulty in writing another so nearly perfect. It is hard to be continuously biographical and maintain a sparkle.

Alexander Woollcott, on the other hand, I suspect has written his masterpiece in “The Story of Irving Berlin” (Putnam). He writes with the same mixture of sentiment and intellectuality that characterized his fine essay, “Madame Cocotte”. In the story of Izzy Baline, the newsboy, he has given in a brief but cleverly inclusive book a study of the Jew in America, of the old Bowery, of the legends and facts of Broadway, of the peculiar circle which Woollcott himself knows so well. He spends no time glorifying jazz; but simply gives you the career of the man who crystallized it in “Alexander’s Ragtime Band”. If Alexander Woollcott would take the time to study some figure of world renown, he could write a great biography. He has something in him of the Boswell, yet he has a surface wit that always saves him from scraping his knees too long on the cathedral floor. This is certainly the best book of its type to spring from Broadway. Without being sentimental in itself, it yet gives a picture of the sentimentality of Tin Pan Alley and Times Square. It is an achievement in taste and interpretation. — J. F.

A SHELF OF RECENT BOOKS

A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING

By Isabel Paterson

WHILE critics wrangle over the merits and possibilities of the objective and subjective approach in fiction, novelists continue to follow their own fancy. Here are two almost perfect examples in opposition. Somerset Maugham, striving for detachment and trusting to observation of material phenomena for dramatic effect, weakens in the last chapter. He draws a Spartan moral for the consolation of those who falter at sheer stoicism. Donald Douglas holds out to the bitter end, and leaves the verdict to the bystander.

Considered simply as a writer, Maugham himself affords a curious psychological study. After years of obscure toil — quick success is the very rare exception in letters — he blazed into fame and fortune as a playwright, with three sparkling comedies holding the boards simultaneously. That was some time ago. Apparently he then felt himself relieved of further obligation to add to the gaiety of nations. His reaction to the mirth of playgoers seems to have been similar to that of the pessimist at the zoo who, considering the laughing hyena, wondered what the dickens the creature had to laugh at. Ever since, Mr. Maugham has been adducing instances calculated to restore sobriety, in a series of novels which combine the paradoxical qualities of sombreness and brilliance.

By "The Painted Veil" he evidently symbolizes the romance with which tradition invests lawless love. He lifts it to reveal the first moment of disillusion.

Glamor is brutally exorcised; he strips the affair to the bare bones. Kitty Fane and Charles Townsend are discovered by Kitty's husband. In the shock of surprise, the debonair Townsend shows up as a shuffling sneak. There is no tragic dignity of a penalty accepted. A single detail serves to make the scene squalid — Townsend's difficulty in putting on his shoes because "they were on the tight side".

It is worse when Townsend tries to reassure himself — himself, not Kitty. Maybe it was not Fane who tried the locked door. It might have been the Chinese amah. "She could be squared." At the very worst, Fane himself might be squared. Both men were in the English government service at Hong Kong. That was why Kitty married Fane, to escape from the dullness of a London suburb. She had never loved him. Did he love her? Infatuation would be a better word; he wanted her, but he thought her a shallow and selfish flirt. Maugham does not invite pity for his characters. He is more apt to intimate that they got just what was coming to them.

Fane pursued his revenge deliberately, ingeniously, with the patience of a scientist and a fine disregard of consequences to himself. He was a doctor, a bacteriologist. Plague was raging in the interior of China. He told Kitty that she must come with him into the plague district, unless her lover would agree to a double divorce (Townsend too was married), and subsequent marriage with Kitty. Fane meant to humiliate Kitty by showing her what a poor thing her lover was. He did; but