

## THE SEVEN SEAS

*André Gide's New Novel — Some Literary "Saplings" — An Unwomanly Woman — Arts and Decoration in Paris — "The Clay Bisons" — A Gift to a Polish Author — The Italian Book Crisis — More Activity in Germany.*

IT is safe to predict that André Gide's "Les Faux-Monnayeurs", which has been serialized in the "Nouvelle Revue Française", will arouse a storm of controversy when published in book form. The author again develops his theory of the value of instinctive impulse as opposed to conventional morality. We may suppose that the "counterfeiters", from whom the book takes its title, are those who distribute false intellectual coinage. It certainly requires considerable psychological acumen to distinguish the difference when both bear the brilliant glittering shimmer of the paradox. In his new novel we again find M. Gide wearing an assumed air of detachment to conceal his constant preoccupation for the *mot juste* and the musical quality of the phrases in prose. He unfolds his narrative with an equally careless air, and its curious form reminds the reader of certain of Conrad's stories which "began in the middle and worked both ways". A critic might object to the way in which the author uses the long arm of coincidence more freely than is customary in self respecting fiction. However, the end justifies the means. The reader who becomes absorbed in the play and interplay of Gide's characters and his unusually intricate plot will be unlikely to quibble at isolated extravagances. What makes this new volume specially significant is the increasing number of young Frenchmen who are prepared to follow Gide's in-

tellectual leadership. They will find here just those qualities which made "Les Nourritures Terrestres" a subtle, delicious, and fascinating poison, which made them even admit "Corydon" and its unsavory corollaries. "Les Faux-Monnayeurs" is a book which no one interested in modern French fiction can afford to overlook.

\* \* \* \*

Those readers of modern French literature who want to avoid following the beaten tracks of the numerous admirers of "popular authors" whose achievements and limitations are generally known, could not do better than keep an eye on the volumes published by Plon-Nourrit in the collection bearing the general title "L'Aubier". "L'Aubier" may be roughly translated as "a sapling". The books included in the series are generally first novels or works by authors not yet generally known. One may suspect that the publishers, in making their choice of "saplings", hope that when they reach maturity they may fit into the successful if somewhat academic grooves of writers like Bourget, Bordeaux, and Barrès, who are already published by them. Many young French authors will no doubt be proud to be reared in the shadow of such stately forest giants aloof from the turmoil of the marketplace and the hothouses of too rapid a flowering. There will also doubtless be many readers who will ignore the

boisterous tendencies of some modern practitioners in favor of those whose work is along more conservative and permanent lines of literary evolution. Three of the volumes already published in the series "L'Aubier" are "La Nouvelle Helène" by Jean Longnon, "Echec et Mat" by Bouzinac-Cambon, and "Mathias Crismant" by Raymond Schwab. This last volume is a biography of an imaginary poet and philosopher, and has attracted much attention among the knowledgeable critics. It is among the outstanding novels of the past few months in Paris.

\* \* \* \*

The public which is devoted to the pink and white miss of magazine fiction and the clinging vine heroine of sentimental fiction will not care for the heroine of "La Bonifas", Jacques Lacretelle's new novel, one of the notable books which Paris has been talking of recently. Marie Bonifas is a pronounced man hater, a state of mind resulting partly from certain experiences in her early childhood, partly from the development of an almost morbid taste for domination which grows stronger as she becomes older. This trait in her character finally reaches a point where she is looked on as a sort of pariah by the other inhabitants of Vernon. It needs the German invasion to prove that precisely the same qualities complained of by her compatriots in her private life make her a natural born leader. The whole narrative is told with a fine leisureliness recalling Arnold Bennett's "Old Wives' Tale". At the same time Lacretelle, here as in his earlier work "Silbermann", has taken the trouble to give his central figure fulness of outline and solidity of structure in contrast with the ineffective characterization which is so pronounced a weakness of the contemporary novel.

The recent Paris exposition of industrial and decorative art has produced a flood of volumes dealing with the wide range of subjects in that category. In most instances they have taken the form of stately portfolios containing reproductions of pieces of furniture, wrought iron fixtures, glassware, woven materials or embroideries displayed in the various buildings of the exposition. Large or small, limited to one particular subject or general in their scope, they produce in the reader a feeling of confusion somewhat similar to that experienced by the conscientious visitor to the exposition itself. The abundance of details perhaps spoiled one's appreciation of the exposition as a whole. Of all the guidebooks, monographs, portfolios, and other books produced, one work stands out prominently, not only for its utility to the visitor on the spot, but for the information it supplies to the foreigner unable to come to France. This book, "Pour Comprendre l'Art Moderne", is written by H. Verne and R. Chavance, and is published by Hachette. It answers simply and clearly the layman's queries: "What is modern decorative art? What are its origins and tendencies? In what respects is it different from what we are accustomed to?" Although the book is small, the clearness of its abundant illustrations enables one easily to follow visually the authors' statements. They have undoubtedly succeeded in conveying a sense of the fundamental unity existing between the various art forms, and in this respect alone their volume merits attention. I hope it will be translated.

\* \* \* \*

An imaginative work of unusual interest is "The Clay Bisons", an attempt to reproduce realistically the life of the Magdalenian hunters whose

impressionist paintings of the mammoth, the bison, and the reindeer executed 20,000 years ago have astonished the world. Every detail of the life of those remote days is based upon evidence found in the painted caves, and the book, though frankly a work of imagination, may be read as an introduction to the study of prehistoric life in Europe. It has appeared serially in the "Journal des Débats". Its author, Vicomte Max Begouen, though only just thirty, has already won recognition in many fields. He is a novelist, a musician, a poet, and a sculptor of more than ordinary merit. After a distinguished war service he settled down in his château on the foothills of the Pyrenees to writing and archæology. He was the discoverer and explorer of the two remarkable Magdalenian Caverns, Inc d'Andoubert and Les Trois Frères, and their prehistoric paintings and sculptures. In the former he discovered the famous group of moldings in clay which give their title to this book which is being published in Paris by Arthène Fayard. The English translation has been done by Sir Basil Thomson, who has lately been working with Vicomte Begouen in cave exploration.

\* \* \* \*

Ladislav St. Reymont, winner of the 1924 Nobel Prize, has been accorded the unusual honor of the purchase and presentation to him of an estate in Poland. A mass meeting of peasants was held in his honor at the farm of Vincent Witos, ex-Prime Minister of Poland and leader of the Peasant Party. The money was subscribed by peasants throughout Poland in recognition of the assistance given to the cause of the Polish peasantry by the publication of Reymont's tetralogy of novels, "The Peasants", for which he was awarded

the Prize. The estate is of the homestead type owned by the Polish peasant farmer, the class to which Reymont belongs. It has also been suggested that Reymont be proposed as a candidate for political honors, but his poor health will probably prove an obstacle. He is now at work revising one of his earlier works for translation into English, and has a new novel in contemplation. His works have already been translated into six languages. A curious tribute to the realism of "The Peasants" was paid by the German Army of Occupation which, on entering Poland after the war, authorized the reading of the book by its officers as an aid to the understanding of the psychology of the Polish peasantry with whom they had to deal.

An unusual distinction has been conferred upon A. Lytton Sells, author of "Les Sources Françaises de Goldsmith", in the award by the Académie Française of a Prix Bordin, which carries with it the title of Lauréat de l'Académie Française, an honor which very few Englishmen can claim.

\* \* \* \*

Professor Aldo Sorani has some hard things to say about the poverty of Italian book production in his "Il Libro Italiano" (Milan: Bertieri and Vanzetti). He complains, with justification, that Italian books are unattractively produced, cost too much, and lack individual character. Compared with the literary output of other countries, Italian books are on this account at a grave disadvantage, and for the lethargy which permeates readers generally, Professor Sorani blames the methods of publishers and booksellers. Nothing is done, he asserts, to encourage the public to read books. Publishers and booksellers both lack enterprise and discrimination.

Professor Sorani's criticisms are no doubt partially justified, but it may well be the old story of taking a horse to the water. In this case, the Italian character may be fundamentally responsible. The average Italian is no reader of books. The last thing even quite educated Italians think of buying is a book. There is of course a genuine appreciation of literature in Italy, but it is confined to a small minority. Even Professor Sorani admits that the Italian public does not read books and compares unfavorably in this respect with the English and American peoples. It has been suggested that the sunshine and blue skies of Italy tend to make Italians spend their leisure in outdoor pursuits rather than in reading.

Whatever the real reasons for the national apathy, there is no doubt that the Italian book is approaching a crisis, and if it is to be rescued from complete stagnation, something will have to be done. The situation is not altogether hopeless and a good word must be said for the activities of the "Società Generale delle Messagerie Italiane" which, in its capacity of intermediary between publishers and booksellers, does excellent work in the distribution of Italian literature both at home and abroad.

\* \* \* \*

I hear that there is a great boom in cheap editions in Germany. Some of the big publishers are launching out into most enterprising schemes for the production of books at 1 mark 50. One well known firm is planning the publication of cheap editions of translated English and American classics (modern as well as old) at just under

one mark. A first edition of 50,000 copies of each volume in this collection has been guaranteed by the German booksellers, and I am told that the publishers are paying a good royalty with an advance sum in sterling for the translation rights.

The complete German edition of Mr. Galsworthy's "Forsyte Saga" is to be published in Vienna this autumn, and there are indications that it will be almost as great a success in that language as in English. The translator has been engaged on the work for some years, and I hear that it is an exceptionally beautiful translation. Mr. Galsworthy lays more stress on the quality of the translation of his books than most authors, and rightly so. I believe he is very pleased with the way "The Forsyte Saga" has been done.

The Swedish rights of "Arrowsmith", Sinclair Lewis's latest best seller, have been sold recently. Most of Mr. Lewis's books have been published in Scandinavia, and his work is much admired in that country.

The French translator of Jack London and James Oliver Curwood is now engaged, I hear, in translating Achmed Abdullah's work for France. Mr. Curwood was recently in Paris and was much impressed by the enthusiasm for his work in France. Since France buys fewer English and American books for translation than almost any other European country, Mr. Curwood's success is all the more notable.

Christine Frederick's excellent book on "New Housekeeping" which has done so much to lighten domestic labor in the States, has just been sold for translation into Polish.

MICHAEL JOSEPH

## THE GOSSIP SHOP

IT is no longer a secret that E. Barington is a woman. Her publishers come out bravely in their announcements and say that "her" new novel will follow the same plan as heretofore, imagination playing upon historical facts — this time concerning Napoleon and Josephine. Harry Hervey, it is reported, has finished the third book of his new novel although he is ill with fever at Angkor. He has been exploring Siam and Cambodia in Indo-China. To see the ruins of Angkor has been the dream of fifteen years, and his letters express no disillusionment. Floyd Dell finds the tea hour in London a charming time and regrets that he has neglected this amiable institution. He is greatly impressed with Michael Arlen's Mayfair. Mr. Dell is hard at work on some scholarly researches, and long ago sent me a clipping about Shaw, which I forgot to print. It appeared originally in the London "Daily Herald":

Few would ever credit Mr. Bernard Shaw with having suffered from nerves.

Yet on Saturday, while paying tribute at King's Langley to the work carried on there for many years by Mrs. William Archer, at her Nerve-Training Colony, he related that he had been one of her earliest "patients".

As the "admirable public speaker" which (he said) she had helped him to become, he made an appeal on behalf of a fund which assists poor persons to benefit by her treatment.

Speaking of the prevalence of "nerves", he said most people were unfit to live with, as could be found out by asking those who had to live with them. "We are all mad, more or less", he added.

"Why", exclaimed Mr. Shaw, in a burst of candour, "if you knew everything about me that I know about myself, you would get up and rush out of the place. You would wonder why such a dangerous person was allowed to remain at large."

The war was a landmark in the history of "nerves", he declared. It was the first war in which men admitted that they felt fear.

Returned from abroad is Hugh Lofting, creator of Doctor Dolittle. And it appears that "The Story of Doctor Dolittle", "Rumpty-Dudget's Tower" by Julian Hawthorne, and "Poor Cecco" by Margery Williams Bianco have been translated into Braille for the benefit of blind children.

There has always seemed to me to be a certain magic about those men who were in any way connected with Mark Twain and the grand old men of his time, or with Richard Harding Davis and Stephen Crane, about whom tales have been told me by a southern gentleman, Major Wheatley. The Major is to be found at an old desk in the picturesque offices of the New York "Morning Telegraph". L. Frank Tooker, for forty years on the staff of "The Century", was closely in touch with several generations of American writers. Coming from a family of ship captains and ship owners, he turned first to the sea, but his love of letters was stronger even than his love of ships. In addition to his work as associate editor on "The Century", he contributed short stories and verse to the magazines and was the author of several novels. On September 17, Mr. Tooker died at his home in Greenwich, Connecticut, at the age of seventy one. During his lifetime he witnessed new and eccentric vogues in literature as well as in dress; but he would always say: "They will pass. Good literature remains the same in its important