

THE NEW SEASON IN FICTION

By Isabel Paterson

ALTHOUGH the vigorous and slightly embittered impulse toward satiric realism which has dominated postwar fiction is by no means exhausted, a tentative survey of the first novels of 1927 seems to discover that other points of view are beginning to attract the novelists. The list of current and forthcoming novels is extraordinarily varied; it includes a little of everything: sentiment, romance, smart sophistication, æsthetic detachment, old fashioned melodrama, impressionism and expressionism, cinematographic effects, rustic simplicity, savage irony, exotic fantasies, drab sociological studies, historical and "problem" novels, and a vast quantity of acceptably contrived stories of the type designated "the literature of escape", intended to entertain without calling for any intellectual exertion on the part of the reader. There doesn't seem to be any main current or tendency. And there is no obvious, phenomenal "best seller" in sight; nothing that promises to create a sensation. But until all the returns are in, there is always a chance.

Sinclair Lewis's "Elmer Gantry" may prove to be the big event, of course. The theme and treatment, as announced, leave the matter open for speculation. It is a vitriolic exposure of the psychology and methods of a modern Tartuffe, an evangelist of the blatant, self advertising species, aware of his own hypocrisy. Nobody can portray a "type" better than Sinclair Lewis; his astonishing gift of caricature, which never slips over the line into

burlesque unintentionally, has been amply demonstrated. The book is said to be brutally clever, and it is bound to provoke much critical discussion. It is a long novel, crammed with episodes and characters. And it might be supposed that a novel dealing with the universal question of religion cannot fail to find a multitude of readers. But the highly popular religious books of the past have been serious, pious to the verge of smugness. "Tartuffe" was suppressed in its time; "The Damnation of Theron Ware", though brilliant and vital enough to have survived its day, was not exactly popular in the large sense. "Elmer Gantry" may be; but if so, it must break all precedents. Anyhow, it seems to be the one designedly "devastating" novel of this spring.

Anne Parrish's "Tomorrow Morning" is a realistic presentation of obscure, frustrated lives; but it is sympathetic to the verge of sentimentality. An Australian story, "Working Bullocks", by Katharine Susannah Prichard, is said to be in the same genre as Ellen Glasgow's "Barren Ground", though the scene is set in the Antipodean backwoods. Mary Badger Wilson's "The Painted City", described as "drypoints of Washington life", is more like an acid etching of the narrow lives of petty office holders in Washington.

May Sinclair, who has always regarded modern life through the rose colored spectacles of a romantic, in that she sees her characters as governed by their own personal emotions rather

than by any sociological compulsions, has created another temperamental English family in "The Allinghams". It is concerned with the adolescent years of six brothers and sisters. In her recent novels she has carried artistic economy to the point of asceticism, but she is always capable of surprises.

After "Lolly Willowes", one may be certain that Sylvia Townsend Warner's work will not fail of elegance, sly humor, and curious erudition, in spite of the uninviting title of her second novel: "Mr. Fortune's Maggot". The central character is a South Sea missionary, whose lifework was crowned by the conversion of a solitary heathen! The spiritual awakening of a man of forty is the theme of Alice Brown's "Dear Old Templeton". It sounds a little like Zona Gale's "Preface to a Life" — but a theme is only a point of departure for a novelist.

It doesn't matter what a book by James Stephens is "about"; the elfin gaiety and quaint wisdom of his unique genius transforms whatever he touches. His "Etched in Moonlight" is listed as a collection of short stories or sketches.

"From Man to Man" (or "Perhaps Only"), a posthumous work by Olive Schreiner, is an unfinished and decidedly "dated" novel of the nineties, in which a wronged wife and a ruined girl are the principal exhibits. Olive Schreiner's feminism was old fashioned and melodramatic even from a contemporary standpoint; yet there is a compelling quality in her undisciplined ardor.

For the first time in I don't know how many years, G. K. Chesterton offers a full length novel, "The Return of Don Quixote". Naturally, the hero is a champion of the author's own peculiar theories of Catholic mediævalism. Gertrude Atherton has gone back a couple of thousand years in

history to find an extremely modern heroine for "The Immortal Marriage", which is based on the love story of Aspasia and Pericles. Francis Brett Young tells the story of one woman's life in two volumes, and calls it "Love is Enough". All his work is characterized by a restrained romanticism.

In "The Old Countess" Anne Douglas Sedgwick transports a young Englishman and his bride to France, and involves their destinies with that of a sophisticated "little French girl". David Garnett is more whimsical in his choice of Paris as the ultimate goal of an English clergyman's daughter, whose flight from the stagnant peace of her father's rectory furnishes the story and title of "Go She Must". This is a very short novel, which produces the strange effect of a highly dramatic episode witnessed from a distance, through some chill crystalline medium.

Virginia Woolf works out the complex relations of an oddly assorted English family living in the Hebrides, in "To the Lighthouse". Her last novel, "Mrs. Dalloway", was a rarely delicate and subtle psychological study; nobody who read it will be likely to overlook its successor. It may very well be among the best sellers.

Though "The Happy Tree" is Rosalind Murray's first novel (so far as I know), its pensive charm may be a passport to popularity. It is the story of a woman of forty, for whom love and youth and joy were banished from the world by the war. "Mr. Gilhooley", by Liam O'Flaherty, is a robust, sardonic tragedy of derelict souls in the slums of Dublin.

A new novel by Edith Wharton, "Twilight Sleep", is announced tentatively; perhaps it will not appear until autumn. It is described as a tale of new New York, concerned with the children of the triumphant outlanders

who captured society, by the power of their wealth, a generation ago. Booth Tarkington, in "The Plutocrat", is not quite successful in his apotheosis of the new-rich middle westerner of today, whom Tarkington compares to the imperial Roman overrunning the effete civilizations of Europe in a mood of exuberant good nature.

An unusually large number of important foreign novels are scheduled for spring publication. Joseph Delteil treats the Great War as if it were a mediæval legend, in "The Poilus". Sigrid Undset's epic trilogy of fourteenth century Norway is brought to a conclusion in "The Cross". André Maurois has an extensive study of the French bourgeoisie, entitled "Bernard Quesnay". The gradual rise to wealth of a Russian peasant family turned merchants, and their subsequent disintegration through luxury, is the subject of Maxim Gorky's "Decadence", which covers the last thirty years before the Great War. Jacob Wassermann goes back to the dark and dreadful period of the Thirty Years War in Germany for a background to "The Triumph of Youth". University and political life in Germany fifty years ago supplies the material for "The Mad Professor" by Hermann Sudermann. Blasco Ibáñez evokes from the dusty files of history an extraordinary figure, Pedro de Luna, in "The Pope of the Sea".

With "Mother and Son", Romain Rolland continues the story of a French feminist who chose to bear an illegitimate child rather than marry the lover who had been unfaithful to her. "Bella", by Jean Giraudoux, is a *roman à clef*, based on the rivalry of two important French families in politics and industry. "Ariane", by Claude Anet, is a study of a highly temperamental Russian girl in Paris.

A mystical pessimism is the keynote of "The Magic Mountain" by Thomas Mann, which surveys the world of today through the mind of a young German scientist exiled by ill health to a Swiss sanatorium. Klabund, in "Brackie the Fool", also holds the mirror up to mankind, in the hands of a symbolical, inspired zany. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice", by Hanns Heinz Ewers, is a sardonic study of religious hysteria in an Italian village. Knut Hamsun's "Mysteries" is also a picture of a village turned upside down by the advent of an uncanny stranger. Arthur Schnitzler has written a "dream satire" which he calls "Rhapsody". "Uncle Angel", by Panait Istrati, is labeled the story of "an apostate Job". And there is the difficult case of a noble family living on an island in the Danube where Hungary, Servia, and Roumania meet, which is called "Denied a Country".

Pauline Smith's "The Beadle", though it is a novel of South Africa, brings to mind the strong simplicity of Knut Hamsun's "Growth of the Soil". Or it might be compared to "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", since the heroine is a girl betrayed by her own innocence; but Andrina is saved in the end by her sweet integrity. The primitive existence of a community of back veldt Boers, who have preserved the traditions and customs of the pre-industrial civilization of the old country almost intact, is depicted with sympathy and apparently effortless skill.

"The Giant of Oldborne", by John Owen, is the pathetic story of a circus freak unhappily endowed with a sensitive and affectionate nature. The homely wisdom and strength of an American farmer's wife supplies the subject of "Jen Culliton", by Nelia Gardner White.

For contrast, there is a representa-

tive group of the consciously sophisticated novelists, led by Michael Arlen. His "Young Men in Love" includes in its characters a Kansas girl, "queen of the London stage", and an English patrician beauty; which accounts for the title. There is also a great financier, and various "golden lads" and smart dowagers. It is just the sort of thing Michael Arlen can do, and nobody else, for if others could they would.

Beverley Nichols, who published his reminiscences last year, he being then twenty five, also takes his hero for a tour of Mayfair, in "Crazy Pavements", which ought to be a pleasant champagne cocktail in fiction form, to judge by his previous performance. And "The Hoop", by J. C. Snaith, follows the fortunes of a prima donna who rose from the London slums to the boards of Covent Garden. "Latter-day Symphony", by Romer Wilson, is a very queer little novel of two hopeless lovers sighing in vain after an unresponsive lady of the highest fashion. Lois Montross laughs at the artistic attitudes of Greenwich Village, in "The Talk of the Town", by bringing a lady elocutionist from Illinois to the Village in search of recognition for her special form of self expression.

As a promoter of innocent merri-ment, P. G. Wodehouse is unequalled. He has a novel called "The Small Bachelor". His name is a sufficient guarantee; and besides, nobody can describe a Wodehouse novel. He has an uncanny knack of exposing human nature in its moments of lofty and unpremeditated idiocy, which reduces me to tears of solemn joy. Perhaps George A. Birmingham surpassed Wodehouse in his best novels ("Spanish Gold", "Lalage's Lovers", and "General John Regan"). Though "The Smuggler's Cave" is not Bir-

mingham's best, it has its high moments. Magdalen Hall-King (Cleone Knox, of "The Diary of a Young Lady of Fashion") has written a lighthearted spoof on the stodgy, standard British autobiography, in "I Think I Remember". In American, Ethel Kelley writes of the comedy ensuing from the marriage of an heiress with her chauffeur, and calls it "Home, James".

Burton Rascoe's "Gustibus", which is positively promised for this spring, gives the lowdown on what a young man thinks about. Mostly, it's a girl, but art, literature, philosophy, money, and such lesser affairs intrude; the underlying idea is behaviorism on the higher levels of action. "On Such a Night", by Babette Deutsch, dramatizes the reactions and interactions of contrasting personalities at a house party.

"The Marionette", by Edwin Muir, shows the development of a boy's imaginative faculty. In "Little Pitchers", by Isa Glenn, a rather cheap marital tragedy is revealed through a small boy's half comprehending perception of it. I don't know what "One Crystal and a Mother", by Ellen Du Pois Taylor, means, but Ford Madox Ford commends it. Ludwig Lewisohn, in "Roman Summer", takes a middle westerner abroad in search of self realization. A woman's slow emancipation from the cramping influence of her Puritan ancestry is traced by George F. Hummel in "Evelyn Grainger".

"Passing the Love of Women", by Joseph White, is a tale of two brothers bound together by the weakness of one and the strength of the other. "Your Cuckoo Sings by Kind", by Valentine Dobree, depicts the unfolding of a girl's soul at the awkward age. Edna Bryner traces the adjustments of family life, in "Andy Brandt's Ark", from a

decidedly original approach; she takes a woman back, after fifteen years of absence, to rediscover her parents and brothers and sisters as quite different individuals from the persons they had been during her childhood. And in "The Admiral and Others" Peggy Temple, herself a girl of twelve, gives her impressions of the adult world. "Shule Agra", by Kathleen Coyle, works out the problem of a rich and cultured Irish lady who married a mechanic.

The younger generation isn't ready to retire yet. Philip Gibbs covers the general strike and other English domestic difficulties in "Young Anarchy". "Pilgrims", by Ethel Mannin, concerns a young man in search of beauty in this materialistic age. "These Frantic Years", by James Warner Bellah, sends a young man from New York to Paris and the Riviera, presumably on a like errand. "The Longest Shadow", by Jeffery E. Jeffery, is a rather jumbled tale of a liberal English youth born into a Conservative English family and escaping from it after a prolonged struggle.

"Enter, a Messenger", by Richard Blaker, is described as a love story. Blaker's two previous novels gave great promise. Their special quality is hard to define; he has an unusual insight for human motives, a kindly sense of irony, not enforced but deduced from the way things do really happen. He is a realist who knows that emotions are also real. When he finds himself fully — that is to say, develops his special technique, as Virginia Woolf has done — I expect a really notable novel from him. "Enter, a Messenger" may be that.

Other novels which I take to be love stories are "Midsummer Music", by Stephen Graham; "Rogues and Vagabonds", by Compton Mackenzie;

"Mary was Love", by Guy Fletcher; "Clad in Purple Mist", by Catherine Dodd (author of "The Farthing Spinster"); "The Goose-feather Bed", by E. Temple Thurston; "The Proper Place", by O. Douglas; "Shadows Waiting", by Eleanor Carroll Chilton; "Laurel and Straw", by James Saxon Childers; "Dream's End", by Thorne Smith; "Daphne Adeane", by Maurice Baring; "Young Malcolm", by George Blake; "The Delectable Mountains", by Struthers Burt; "Doomsday", by Warwick Deeping; "A Shadowy Third", by Elizabeth Napier; and Christopher Ward's "Starling", which is the story of a woman, smothered by the atmosphere of great wealth, who escapes to find love.

More specifically preoccupied with family life is "Red Damask" by Emanie Sachs, an analysis of a conscientious and rather self righteous woman. E. F. Benson's "Pharisees and Publicans" is a humorous but unsparing portrait of another narrow and domineering wife who drives her husband to revolt. For myself, I find much enjoyment in these quiet and leisurely dissections of petty souls in which Benson excels. "Pa", by Margaret Ashmun, is a family tragicomedy. "Pressure", by Margaret Culkin Banning, shows the effect of community forces on individuals. "The Pendulum", by Mrs. Burnett Smith, swings against complacent conventionality. "This Day's Madness", by the author of "Miss Tiverton Goes Out", depicts a girl's revolt against family traditions. So does "The Malletts", by E. H. Young.

"The Case of Bevan Yorke", by W. B. Maxwell, will probably be like his other novels, a generous but quite palatable slice of Victorian sentimentality. And it need hardly be explained that Robert Keable's "Lighten Our Darkness" narrates the troubles of

a young man in holy orders seeking a way out. The business woman gets her innings, with "Lions in the Way" by Hughes Mearns and "The Up-Grade" by George Gibbs.

At least seven American historical novels are promised. Thomas Boyd reaches the Civil War, with "Marching On". So does Morris Markey, in "The Band Plays Dixie". "Islanders", by Helen Hull, is of the women who stayed at home in New England when their men went to California in Forty nine. "Sword and Candle", by Sidney Herschel Small, goes with the Spanish expedition of 1781 which resulted in the founding of Los Angeles. "Migrations", by Evelyn Scott, recreates the antebellum south. Edgar Lee Masters's "Kit O'Brien" is a boy who grew up in Lincoln's country in pioneer days. I suspect that the hero of James Marshall's "Ordeal by Glory" may be the late Governor Altgeld, Vachel Lindsay's "eagle forgotten".

"Brother Saul", by Donn Byrne, and "Dawn", by Irving Bacheller, are both romances of the first years of the Christian era. Marie Conway Oemler has taken an episode from John Wesley's sojourn in Georgia as a starting point for "The Holy Lover".

There are two Napoleonic novels: "Glory", by Léonie Aminoff, the seventh volume of an interminable series; and "The Empress Might Have Been", by Octave Aubry, which fictionalizes Napoleon's amour with Marie Walewska. Dimitri Merezhkovsky, in "Akhnaton", goes back to ancient Egypt for his story.

Novels of exotic or oriental flavor are not lacking. "The Wreath of Cloud", by Lady Murasaki, continues the amorous and other adventures of that engaging Japanese Don Juan, Prince Genji. "The Son of the Grand Eunuch", by Charles Pettit, recreates the

court of the old Empress Dowager of China. "Flower Phantoms", by Ronald Fraser, is pure fantasy. Eden Phillpotts in "The Miniature" has the Olympians observing evolution. "The Honorable Picnic", by Thomas Rau-cat, and "Lotus of the Dusk", by Dorothy Graham, are stories of the European colonies in China and Japan today. Julia Peterkin's "Black April" is said to be a rather remarkable study of southern Negro life on a plantation; there are no white characters in it. "Lud-in-the-Mist", by Hope Mirrlees, is apparently in the vein of Walter de la Mare, an exploration of a "country of the mind".

There is a sociological flavor to "The Yankee Passional", by Samuel Ornitz, in which three Maine men descend upon the sinful New York of the nineties. "East Side, West Side", by Felix Riesenbergs, is a scrambled melodrama of New York now. Martin Mills in "The Aristocrat" offers a "memoir of a social climber". Upton Sinclair paints political graft in "Oil". A British officer in India is the principal figure in "An Indian Day", by Edward Thompson. James Stevens enlists a Kansas Methodist boy in the A. E. F., in "Mattock". John Cournos discusses the incompatibility of art and marriage, in "O'Flaherty the Great". L. M. Hussey's "Odalisque" narrates a series of disastrous disillusionments, experienced and occasioned by a South American girl in Caracas and New York.

For harmless distraction there are always such novels as Kathleen Norris's "The Sea Gull"; Hallie Erminie Rives's "The Magic Man"; Archibald Marshall's "That Island"; Anthony Pryde's "Rowforest"; Berta Ruck's "Her Pirate Partner"; Helen R. Martin's "Sylvia of the Minute"; Owen Johnson's "Children of Divorce";

Stephen McKenna's "The Secretary of State"; E. Phillips Oppenheim's "The Interloper"; Ethel M. Dell's "The Black Knight"; and Richard Connell's "The Mad Lover".

And finally, there are the adventure yarns, which grade rather better than usual: "Pearl Hunger", by Gordon Young; "The City in the Sea", by H. deVere Stacpoole; "Sir Percy Hits Back", by Baroness Orczy; "Corsican Justice", by J. G. Sarasin; "Back of Beyond", by Stewart Edward White; "The Marquis de Bolibar", by Leo Perutz; "Path of the Sun", by R. W. Alexander; "The Drums of Aulone", by Robert W. Chambers; "The Bird of Fire", by Maria Moravsky; "The Tavern Knight", by the indefatigable Rafael Sabatini; "Once in the Saddle", by Eugene Manlove Rhodes; "Sunny Mateel", by H. H. Knibbs; "Saint in Ivory", by Lorine Pruette (the heroine

is Saint Genevieve of Paris); "A Blade for Sale", by David Lindsay; "The Schooner California", by H. B. Drake; "Galleons Reach", by H. M. Tomlinson (the first novel by the author of several delightful travel books); "Ulysse and the Sorcerers", by Marius-Ary Leblond; "Horizon", by Robert Carse; "On the King's Couch", by Octave Aubry; "Wreck of the Redwing", by Beatrice Grimshaw, whose South Sea Island stuff is always good; "Ardent Flame", by Frances Winwar (Paolo and Francesca again); "The Dark Fire", by Elinor Mordaunt; "The Lost Adventurer", by Walter Gilkyson; "Moonraker", by F. Tennyson Jesse (the exploits of a female pirate); and Frederick Niven's "Wild Honey", which contains as much truth as fiction, being a recreated memory of tramping through the northwest thirty years ago.

CHIMES

By William Alexander Percy

HER shadows are rimmed with silver,
 And there is wild beautiful sunlight in her anger;
 Her injustice is some virtue in excess,
 And the dapple of dew is on her passion.
 Because of her I am like the morning for laughter
 And like the morning glory vine for innocence;
 Rain washed leaves might fillet my forehead
 And a dream could hover there.
 Always I seem to be lying
 On the green soft meadow of the world
 Beneath the blue bell of heaven where the birds hurry,
 Repeating lauds and magnificats and glorias:
 The blue bell of heaven is pealing,
 The blue bells of the morning glory ring out hosannas,
 It is Easter morning
 And my heart is a steeple with chimes.