

trans-Mississippi transportation as represented by the dashing pony express and the overland stagecoach of the eighteen fifties and sixties, whose trails are now being retraced by the wheels of the motor car. Alvin F. Harold's "Old Towpaths" (Appleton) does for the American canal boat era, whose patron saint was George Washington himself, what Mr. Hafen has accomplished for the ante-steam stagecoach routes. And, to continue the story, there is Charles Frederick Carter's "When Railroads Were New" (Simmons-Boardman), which narrates the beginnings of such lines as the Erie, the Santa Fe, the New York Central, and the Canadian Pacific. All three books deal authoritatively with their subjects, and neither in descriptive narrative nor illustration have their authors forgotten the picturesque appeal of older decades dear to American hearts.

"English Women in Life and Letters" by M. Phillips and W. S. Tomkinson (Oxford) proves to be rather a hodgepodge of impressions of seventeenth and eighteenth century life in England. It is jammed too full of facts, and these ill assorted, to be more than mildly interesting — a tidbit here, a sample there, but too many by half to leave room for that fascinating embroidery of detail which gives the beauty to such volumes as this. There is a vast amount of suggested interest, but the interest itself is obscured by an all pervading, overwhelming impression of quantity. The authors would have been well advised to prune and to thin out ruthlessly, so that some, at least, of their rare plants might have had a chance to grow and to spread into an equally rare attractiveness.

Liszt has said of Chopin that "he used his art only to give to himself his own tragedy". And it is significant of the Polish musician's life that the characteristic note of many at least of his compositions was what his friends called the "blue note". This, writes Guy de Pourtalès in his excellent life of Chopin called "Polonaise" (Holt), "did not alone proceed from the characteristic Chopin pitches. It was the song of his touch, the timbre of his hand."

M. de Pourtalès has followed the style of his "Franz Liszt: L'Homme d'Amour" and the current fashion of popularizing biography. And this treatment, although it may lessen the importance of the work as a critical evaluation of the composer, certainly does not detract from the expressively vivid picture the author has given us of the life of Frederick-François Chopin. Charles Bayly, Jr., is to be commended for his painstaking translation of a noteworthy book.

The autobiography of State Senator Benjamin Antin, "The Gentleman from the 22nd" (Boni, Liveright), is one of the most subjective life stories ever penned. The author tells a little of his childhood in Russia and his struggles for an education, his political life in which he defeated Samuel DeWitt for the Assembly and Orr for the State Senate, but most of his book is a highly dramatized rhapsody about the needs of democracy and the protection of the much exploited immigrant.

Dr. Thomas Gann, F.R.G.S., F.R.A.I., member of the Maya Society, one of the foremost living authorities on the history and civilization of early Central American aboriginal peoples, describes in his book, "Ancient Cities and Modern Tribes" (Scribner), the late marvelous discoveries made in Yucatan, Guatemala, and Honduras by the scientific expedition which he accompanied to those regions. The work accomplished, as related by the author, should be of vast interest and importance to those learnedly familiar with the deeper waters of New World archæology, but so skilfully has Dr. Gann simplified and enlivened these profundities that the volume should be almost as strong in appeal to the general reader of unusual and valuable books.

Although Arthur Guiterman displays his usual technical skill in "I Sing the Pioneer" (Dutton), the book contains very little that could by any possibility be mistaken for poetry. There are some pleasant jingles, and some smooth-flowing ballads that display neither force nor personality; but the

(Continued on page XXI)

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