

force of Hiram Maxim and not that of Karl Marx which drove the masses to action.

Trotsky with a notable vividness, in which Max Eastman, his admirable translator, must have a share of the credit, portrays the change from Tsar and Rasputin to Kerensky, and from Kerensky to Lenin, halting every now and again to examine the philosophical inferences to be drawn from Russian experiences in her eight months of purgatory which have led to the heaven (or hell) of the existing regime. Was it worth the blood and slaughter, he asks? and decides that the question is as fruitless as asking if the blood and sweat of a normal life make it worth while having been born. Has the revolution achieved a kingdom of universal well-being? It has only had fifteen years for the task, whereas "capitalism in other countries took a hundred years to elevate science and technique to the heights, and plunge humanity into the hell of war and crisis." If it be asked has the revolution justified itself, Trotsky retorts with the question: Did the War justify itself? The revolution, he maintains, has at least provided all Russians with a general culture to replace the superficial culture previously confined to a small class.

One can but agree with Trotsky that fifteen years is too short a period of probation on which to form a judgment, and one can in fairness add that eight months' history from the beginning of those fifteen years is too brief a story to tell of all the implications of so vast a change in a communal organisation, for those eight months were filled with civil war. But in the years that have followed the days of which this history tells, and which Trotsky or another will some day write, the original ideas and ideals passed and the machine guns remained. The technique of capitalism has returned to Russia, and Trotsky is in ignominious exile. The kingdom of well-being towards which the Soviet State is directing itself, is precisely the industrialised kingdom-of-ill-being from which he declares the War emerged. The real question is whether the eight months of fire and slaughter were worth the endurance if the end is only to be the relics of Lenin instead of the saints' bones which the Tsarists cherished, and a land of peasants converted into a land of proletarians? An onlooker might sympathise with a revolution which shattered spiritual fulfilments for the sake of material betterment, or which caused material poverty for the sake of spiritual fulfilment. This revolution only appears to have chained Russia to an inept but menacing materialism at the cost of spiritual anæsthesia.

WORDS CONFUSED AND MISUSED. By Maurice H. Weseen, ss. net. (Pitman.)

The book we all turn to in difficulties of speech or writing is Fowler's "Modern English Usage." But for those hurried commercial persons who do not want to know the reasons for things, but what is right and what wrong, Mr. Weseen's book will prove the very thing to keep on his desk at the office. The book has been carefully edited for English use; the author knows only too well that English and American are two distinct tongues, and to read a Hearst newspaper is almost as bad for an Englishman as the extraction of a molar. So when the man of affairs is in doubt of using "comicaler," "combine together," "constrain or restrain," "flee or fly," "shelffulls or shelves full," "hail or hale," and thousands of similar difficulties that beset him in trying to write not "commercial" but standard English, this book will see him through. Then we may see the gradual extinction of "Re yours of even date," "Will you O-K this?", "They Kay-oed the proposition" and monstrosities of that sort.

DE V. P.-P.

A somewhat unusual distinction has just come the way of Mr. Gunby Hadath, the writer for young people, who has been presented with the Freedom of St. Gervais-les-Bains, in Savoy, at the foot of Mont Blanc. Mr. Hadath resides on Mont Blanc during the summer months, and his "St. Palfry's Cross," which depicts this neighbourhood, has sold largely in America and Scandinavia, and is now being translated into French by Madame de Sailly.

New Light on a Great Victorian

Gordon

An Intimate Portrait

By H. E. WORTHAM. Illus. 12s. 6d. net

Commemorating the centenary of Gordon's birth, this study of his stormy career is based on the entire series of his letters to his sister Augusta, which have never before been available to any previous biographer. His confessions about his lifelong attempt to master himself, now published for the first time, should prove a final contribution to a question which has excited violent controversy.

Paris before the Revolution

The Waiting City

Paris, 1782-88

An abridgement of Mercier's "*Le Tableau de Paris*," translated and edited with Preface and Notes by HELEN SIMPSON. Illus. 12s. 6d. net (Feb. 9)

Arnold Bennett was enthralled by Mercier's wit and satire, which produced this written map of Paris and its citizens in the momentous years before the Revolution. Miss Simpson's fascinating notes show how the French fashions and customs were repeated at the same period in England. The illustrations are from rare contemporary engravings.

HARRAP

JUST PUBLISHED

ELGAR AND HIS MUSIC

By JOHN F. PORTE

with a Foreword by

SIR LANDON RONALD

IN this new book, we have Elgar as revealed in his music, and Elgar's music as it is understood by a lifelong student of the great composer. It is a valuable contribution to the literature of music. It presents a study of Elgar and his works that is quite unspoilt by the mass of familiar argument and controversy, and it discusses his compositions individually in a charming manner, and with the one object—to inform.

Cloth gilt 5/- net 124 pages

Of a Bookseller or:

SIR ISAAC PITMAN & SONS, LTD.
Parker Street, Kingsway, London, W.C.2

MEN, WOMEN AND PRISONS

Mr. Sinclair Lewis's New Novel

By
Edgar Holt

Ann Vickers.

By Sinclair Lewis. 7s. 6d. (Jonathan Cape.)

The appearance of "Ann Vickers" shows that Mr. Sinclair Lewis has returned to his main literary task—the task of giving a clear and vivid account of contemporary American civilisation. In "Babbitt," "Main Street," "Martin Arrowsmith" and "Elmer Gantry" he depicted



Mr. Sinclair Lewis.

a number of aspects of that civilisation, but in "Dodsworth" he seemed to have changed his manner. He was content to portray two individual Americans, instead of examining, in his usual comprehensive way, a complete segment of American life. "Dodsworth" was published in 1929, and Mr. Lewis has waited four years before following it up with another novel. In writing "Ann Vickers" he has gone back to his earlier manner, and his story achieves the double result of revealing how Ann Vickers "found herself," and giving a full survey of the life of women prisoners in the United States and the various aspects of prison reform.

It can be seen at once that "Ann Vickers" is not a novel for the idle, unthinking hour. "It is, above all, to make you *see*," said Joseph Conrad, thus defining the aim of one school of novelists. "It is, above all, to make you *think*," Mr. Lewis might retort, and his new novel should inspire some of his fellow-Americans to think more deeply about one part of their national life. But the appeal of the book is not only to his fellow-countrymen, and not only to those who are already interested in prison reform. Mr. Lewis, though undoubtedly a propagandist, is also a brilliant story-teller, who can illustrate his theories by the actions of living and loving human beings; and even those who consider that prison reform is an impossible subject for a novel will be attracted and stirred by the varying fortunes of Ann Vickers, and will thus be forced (perhaps unwillingly) to think about some of the problems with which Ann is confronted. Mr. Lewis's power as a novelist lies in his ability to provoke the reader to reflective thought.

His new novel is the story of a social reformer who tries, to the best of her ability, to "get things done." In the

opening chapters, which are the least satisfactory part of the book, we are shown the early influences which mould the character of Ann Vickers, the daughter of an Illinois school superintendent. When the introductory chapters are over and Ann has graduated at Point Royal College, the story begins to gather speed and momentum, and we follow Ann through the excitements of suffragist work and imprisonment for assaulting the police, social settlement work and an unsatisfactory love-affair, and her first appointment on the staff of a prison.

It is with her appointment as "educational director and chief clerk" at Copperhead Gap Penitentiary, which is described as one of the worst prisons in the United States, that the story enters its more vigorously propagandist phase, and the horrors of Copperhead Gap, where unhealthy conditions, solitary confinement in dark cells, overcrowding and lashing are features of the Women's Division, seem almost incredible in a civilised country. But they must be believed, for Mr. Lewis claims to have given "an entirely accurate account" of the prisons he writes of, and few are likely to question his general conclusions about the effects of such a prison as Copperhead Gap:

"It is not true that every person who came as a first offender to Copperhead Gap, with only amateurish notions of crime, learned in that university of vice about new and slicker crimes, learned the delights of drugs and of prostitution, learned that it was his duty to get even with society by being more vicious next time. Not every one. A few of them were too numbed and frightened to learn anything. But it is true that not one single person failed to go out of Copperhead Gap more sickly of body and more resentful for it, and more capable of spreading disease among the Decent Citizens who had been breeding them to their own ruin."

Ann's efforts to expose Copperhead Gap in the daily press are unsuccessful, for the editors tell her that prison conditions are "not news"; but she is able to further the cause of prison reform by becoming superintendent of the Stuyvesant Industrial Home for Women, "the most modern prison in New York," and there putting into action the theories in which she believes. And in this position she is able to recapture her emotional life, to marry a man and fall in love with another, and finally to undergo the supreme irony of waiting for her lover to be released from prison.

It is perhaps inevitable that any review of "Ann Vickers" should dwell on the sociological aspect more than on the individual characters of the story, but it should not be imagined that Mr. Lewis has allowed his enthusiasm for prison reform to overshadow his interest in human character. Ann Vickers is one of those ideal Americans whom he loves to depict—keen, eager and humanitarian, but still possessing a sense of humour and many of the frailties of ordinary men and women; and such characters as the tedious Russell Spaulding, Ann's first husband; Malvina Wormser, the brilliant woman doctor; the repellent Belle Herringdean and the overwhelming Judge Barney Dolphin are only a few of those who will take their place in Mr. Lewis's gallery of contemporary American portraits. They are drawn as Mr. Lewis sees them, and if some of the portraits are too frank for everyone's liking, he would doubtless reply that he is only concerned with giving a true picture of what he sees in the world about him.

The book is not flawless, for the opening chapters move too slowly, and say nothing which Mr. Lewis and other writers have not already said; but the conventional nature of the opening is fully atoned for by the rest of the novel. It is his skill in blending such ardent propaganda for prison reform with a series of penetrating studies of men and women that makes "Ann Vickers" one of the most important and fascinating novels that Mr. Lewis has written.