

OUR OWN BOOKSHELF

Turgenev, by Avrahm Yarmolinsky. New York: Century Company, 1926. \$4.00.

THERE is something profoundly irritating about Turgenev, and the author of this excellent biography does not allow his admiration for his subject to gloss over that aspect of the great Russian novelist which nearly drove Dostoevskii out of his mind. Beginning with Turgenev's earliest youth, Dr. Yarmolinsky faithfully records every step of his career. He gives a complete picture of the effete surroundings in which the novelist was raised, and follows him on his futile travels the length and breadth of Europe. The book is not, thank heaven, a sample of the 'new biography.' Doubtless Turgenev would lend himself to the shrewd offices of a Strachey, but to most of us he is little more than a name, and we need a thorough study of his character and surroundings before we can pass final judgment on him. To all who are interested in the connections between the literatures of Russia and Europe in the nineteenth century, this book can be warmly recommended.

The Red and the Black, by Stendhal. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926. 2 vols. \$5.00.

'The tyranny of public opinion — and what an opinion! — is as fatuous in the small towns of France as it is in the United States of America.' The truth of that part of the remark which applies to us, discovered recently by our contemporary writers, has driven them to frenzied outbursts differing chiefly in degree of coherency. Stendhal states the fact quietly as a necessary part of the background of his novel. One who is so crass in his egoism as to consult his own conscience in opposition to that of the world will certainly be a queer stick, and will likely come to no good end. This was the undoing of Julien Sorel. For a time his behavior could be interpreted as daring but properly mindful of the main chance. Even after he had ran amuck, a humble coöperation with the powers that were would have saved him. He preferred to flout them. This is martyrdom when the cause is considered worthy of the sacrifice. Otherwise it is damned foolishness.

The intelligence and memory of faithful readers of the *Living Age* make it useless to repeat here the inadequate words of praise of

Stendhal which may be found in our review of the translation of *The Charter House of Parma*. And however great as a stylist, he offers so much more of substance that no tears need be shed over the inevitable loss by translation, which Mr. Moncrieff has reduced to a minimum. Now that the young are permitted to read even the best that literature has to offer, they should be encouraged to supplement Michael Arlen with a little Stendhal. The difference is as great as the old-fashioned distinction between right and wrong.

Mother Dear, by V. Poliakoff (Augur). New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926. \$3.50.

'THE Empress Marie and Her Times' is the subtitle of this book on the last surviving tsaritz of the Romanoff dynasty, who has been living in her native Denmark since the death of her sister Queen Alexandra of Great Britain. The difficulties of a sympathetic biographer in a case like this are easy to understand, but they do not add to the value of the work. The Russian *Matushka* (Dear Mother) has been applied by the people, with varying degrees of warmth, but with few exceptions, to every tsaritz. Consequently the intimation that this name was bestowed upon Marie Feodorovna in token of exceptional popularity gives a misleading impression. The author is right in saying that all intimacy between the Throne and the people of Russia was severed by the murder of Alexander II. This applies perfectly to Marie Feodorovna. Before that tragic event she had been for fifteen years a most popular and accessible Crown Princess — after it she was as distant and nominal a 'Mother Dear' as could be imagined. Long ago she was known as a woman of charming personal qualities and peaceful disposition, and later one heard of her efforts to save her son, Nicholas II, from his wife's morbid influence. But as to any positive benefits that she bestowed on the people, records are scarce. In contrast to the author's high praise of the 'Empress Marie' institutions, this reviewer, who happens to have had an intimate glimpse of one of the foremost of them, remembers it as a most hopelessly bureaucratic place, where the Empress Dowager was seen but once a year on a short official call. But as an entertaining, short, and impartial description of Russian conditions for nearly three quarters of a century, this book is to be recommended.

I Have This to Say, by Violet Hunt. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926. \$3.50.

SINCE Miss Hunt has chosen to treat herself frankly, the reviewer must follow suit, and rudely describe this book as the partial autobiography of a neurotic middle-class Englishwoman whose talent for sympathy put her in a position to know a number of interesting people. She runs on in this vein: 'My head, with or without the hat, is not, though bowed, bloody, to quote the poet Henley's touching vaunt.' For the most part, what Miss Hunt has to say concerns the activities of herself, H. G. Wells, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, W. H. Hudson, D. H. Lawrence, and Rebecca West between the years 1908 and 1916. The fact that her relations with Ford Madox Ford — or Hueffer, as he was once called — led to legal difficulties with the gentleman's wife is not so important to most readers as it is to the author herself. Miss Hunt's 'Story of My Flurried Years' stands or falls on how engrossingly she has been able to write about a period in her career full of emotional interest. To criticize it is not to criticize a book, but a person. Hence there will undoubtedly be many readers who will cotton to this wistful, sincere, outspoken lady. Others will judge her too scatterbrained, and lacking in that sense of proportion on which a true sense of humor also depends.

Juárez and Maximilian, by Franz Werfel. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926. \$1.75.

The Captive, by Edouard Bourdet. New York: Brentano's, 1926. \$2.00.

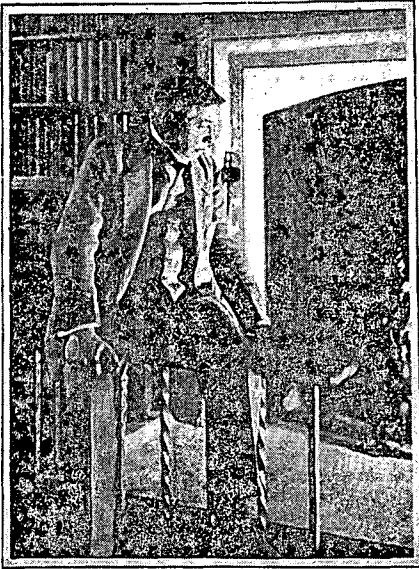
THESE are two of the most important translated plays that have appeared in New York this season, and in book form they retain not a little of their original power. This is especially true of Werfel's 'Dramatic History in Three Phases and Thirteen Pictures' depicting the collapse of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico. Here was a paradoxical theme worthy of Shaw — a mistaken idealist-puppet defeated by his very virtues. The author, who is incidentally one of the coming young men of Central Europe, begins his story shortly before Maximilian was wheedled into signing the decree sentencing to death any rebel bearing arms. The play is rather jerky reading; too many characters make only the vaguest impression; but one does receive a definite picture of Maximilian — a figure so curious that less talented men than Werfel might make a real person out of him. But the play is not primarily a study of character; rather is it a study in contrast and revolution, of the incapacity

of the Old World to cope with the New. The author has shown himself before a symbolistic poet of revolution, and if this play is neither so wild nor so turgid as *The Goat Song*, it is appreciably closer to Mother Earth.

The only thing in common between *The Captive* and *Juárez and Maximilian* is that the villain of neither piece appears on the scene. Werfel never introduces us to Juárez in person, and M. Bourdet achieves his horror effects through a third person. *The Captive* maintains some of the best and most characteristic traditions of the French stage. Squeamish readers and playgoers will not be prejudiced in favor of a drama dealing with the passion of one woman for another, but it cannot be denied that M. Bourdet has dealt skillfully with this rich material. His logic, economy, and intelligence remove the unpleasant atmosphere that a less practised hand could not eliminate and might even cultivate. But the drawback to his cold method is that he concentrates so intensely on his theme that the characters seem to have no existence or activities that do not spring directly from the central motive of the play. At all events, M. Bourdet has given us a lesson in dramatic technique that we shall remember.

The Whispering Gallery, by An Ex-Diplomat. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926. \$3.00.

UNTIL it is definitely known whether this book is the work of Sir Rennell Rodd, Will Rogers, or an imaginative newspaper man, it is idle to pass judgment on anything but its entertainment value. *The Whispering Gallery* contains a series of close-ups of many celebrities — military, political, literary, and royal. Sometimes they are cast in the form of dialogue, sometimes in monologue, occasionally in brief character-sketches. In spite of the author's wily assurance that here for the first time is the *real* Northcliffe, the *real* Kitchener, and so forth, he actually reveals few characteristics of these men with which we are not already familiar. He is at his best in the dialogues — the one between Edward VII and the ex-Kaiser and those in which Lord Balfour figures being the most amusing. The imagination or memory — whichever it is — of the author is aided by a lively and thoroughly indiscreet pen, which has written many passages we should dearly love to believe. Surely the man who wrote this book was privy to some intimate secrets of State; but when we think of the mistakes made by people who sign their writings, we cannot accept the anonymous as gospel.



A. EDWARD NEWTON IN HIS LIBRARY

A EDWARD NEWTON, business man and bibliophile, with a personality as gleeful as his published books reveal, is a Philadelphian by circumstance, but a Londoner by spiritual heritage. Since the happy day some dozen years ago when he burst into the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly* with the first of his priceless papers on collecting, he has been eagerly followed by thousands of delighted readers. He is an authority on books, London, the 18th century in general, and Dr. Johnson in particular. In fact bookish tourists do their London sightseeing with Baedeker in one hand and back *Atlantics* (the ones containing Newton articles) in the other.

To give a friend the *Amenities* for Christmas is to compliment his taste and judgment, and recognize his appreciation of fine things.

The Books of A. Edward Newton

THE AMENITIES OF BOOK COLLECTING

In rare illustrations, amusing recollections, and the kind of information about people and things of literary interest which is seldom to be gleaned from books, an ardent booklover and collector shares his experiences and his treasures. *With illustrations. 8vo. Half boards. Gilt top. \$4.00*

A MAGNIFICENT FARCE

The magnificent farce is the Trial of Warren Hastings, and it loses none of its drollery in Newton's telling. The book contains also "other diversions of a book collector," innumerable beguiling anecdotes and bits of biographical material, which bear out the author's quotation from Dr. Johnson in his book-plate "the biographical part of literature is what I love most."

With illustrations. 8vo. Half boards. Gilt top. \$4.00

THE GREATEST BOOK IN THE WORLD

"The Greatest Book in the World" is, of course, the Bible, and Mr. Newton knows all the rare editions. Among the subjects treated in other chapters are colored-plate books, sporting-books, London "shows" in the eighteenth-eighties, Gilbert and Sullivan, and the Godwin-Wollstonecraft-Shelley group.

With 80 illustrations, largely from the author's collection. Half boards. Gilt top. \$5.00

DR. JOHNSON—A Play

In these four scenes from the life of Doctor Johnson the lover of eighteenth-century literature will find dialogue that is, by virtue of its sources, the very essence of the life of that time. Mr. Newton's understanding of the great Dr. Johnson is evidenced in the selection and assembling of dialogue.

With illustrations. Half boards. \$3.50

Please add ten cents per volume for postage when ordering

These are Atlantic Monthly Press Books, published by Little, Brown & Co.

At all Bookstores or

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY BOOKSHOP

8 Arlington Street

Boston

☞ Of Course, You Heard the Reverberations from Dean Inge's Book "England" and What It Had to Say About the United States. The So-called "Gloomy Dean" Came in for Some Severe Criticism.

☞ With Characteristic Spirit, Dean Inge Will Reply to His Critics in the January Scribner's Magazine, published December 24. Don't Miss It.

In the Same Number

☞ "Captured by Chinese Bandits," the authentic account of an international episode, by Captain Thomas J. Betts of the American Legation at Peking.

☞ "A Criminal Looks at Crime and Punishment" by one serving his second term.

☞ "Democratic Distinction," the first of a series of articles by W. C. Brownell.

☞ Stories by Captain John W. Thomason, Jr., author of "Fix Bayonets!", Will James, Will Rose, Frank Shay, and Shaw Desmond.

☞ You didn't miss the Christmas Scribner's, with its stories by Galsworthy and Anderson and its penetrating article on Dawes, did you? It's still possible to get it, you know.