

NEW BOOKS IN FRANCE

Ames neuves, by Henry Poulaille. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1925. 7 fr. 50 c.

It is not surprising that the chief characters in all these short stories should be poor and unhappy little children, for the author has worked on the staff of *L'Humanité* and devoted much effort to attempts to improve the conditions of the lower classes. He knows his subjects, and, furthermore, his heart is touched by the rough treatment to which the tender souls of little children are exposed. In style the book is severe and restrained; there is no sentimentalizing except between the lines. By sticking to familiar ground and by not attempting too ambitious a performance, M. Poulaille is laying the firmest kind of foundation for a brilliant literary career. He is only thirty years old, but his work abounds in happy deft touches that many an older writer might envy. He will bear watching.

Maria, by Lucien Gachon. Paris: Éditions du Monde Moderne, 1925. 7 fr. 50 c.

THIS extraordinary book is not the work of a literary man at all; the author is an Auvergne peasant who has set down a piece of strict observation — a relation of facts rather than an ordinary novel. *Maria* has a peculiar quality of its own. It describes the daily life of a young peasant girl who marries, after a certain amount of family bickering, settles with her husband's people, and then just goes on living a monotonous round of hard work and meagre pleasures. Her character, which is not a very subtle one, is admirably drawn — her calculating impulsiveness — when in love, her kindness toward her husband and his family, her pride and her hardness. She is guided instinctively by peasant traditions of economy, self-interest, and vanity. M. Gachon's style is surprisingly smooth; nature and art are delicately blended, and the result is a literary curiosity that is also a literary achievement.

La Revanche, by André Thérive. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1925. 7 fr. 60 c.

HERE is something in the traditional French-novel vein. The setting is a provincial town, the characters include an old couple, their great-niece, her uncle, and the uncle's illegitimate son. In obedience to the wishes of his brother and

sister, the uncle does not recognize his offspring. End of Part I. The second part of the book tells of the attempted revenge of the illegitimate son, who tries to accomplish the ruin of his legitimate cousin, Cécile. His efforts are unsuccessful — though the same thing cannot be said of the author, who has shown us a little corner of French provincial life in clear, easy prose that is a delight to read.

Roux, le Bandit, by André Chamson. Paris: Bernard Grasset, Les Cahiers Verts, 1925. 9 fr.

THE truth of the matter is that Roux was really not a bandit at all. He simply refused to serve in the French army during the war, and fled to the mountains, where he assumed the triple rôle of cave-man, prophet, and conscientious objector. His fellow townsmen treated him like a monster of iniquity, like a deserter under fire. But at the end of the book he comes into his own and explains why he was too proud to fight. The story is told with great economy through the medium of an old Cévennes peasant, a touch that gives the book real local color without afflicting the reader with the difficulties that dialect is heir to. M. Chamson is a young writer, and this is his first book to find a Paris publisher.

L'Homme couvert de femmes, by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française, 1925.

ACCORDING to confidential advices just received from Paris, this book is going to cause some excitement. The title is a happy one, for wherever the hero goes he creates a panic among the petticoats. He breaks all the rules of successful love-makers, yet his fascination is fatal, his flair flawless. The theory that he works on — intuitively, of course — is to say just what he thinks on all occasions. Yet he knows what he is doing at every moment; his head is always quite clear. Being a gentleman of refined sensibilities, he prefers a pretty, tender-hearted girl to the type who is a bear at intellectual conversation. In plan the book is a hodgepodge, but there is enough material in it for a dozen ordinary novels. The author, a veteran of the war, is a man of turbulent personality who has attracted an enthusiastic following.

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