

a knowledge of their haunts, and will seek them out at favorable times and seasons; if he have a wide range, he need rarely go without a dish for his dinner.

Let me conclude with a twofold caution: let no one imagine that by pouring a little spore-dust into the ground he may obtain a private bed of mushrooms in his back yard, for, *pace* your contributor, that is not the way it is done; moreover, enjoy your "brick-tops" if you will, but be sure it isn't a "jack-o'-lantern" before you eat it!

B. Q. MORGAN

Washington, D. C., June 4

BOOKS

Au Champ d'Honneur

Letters and Diary of Alan Seeger. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.25 net.

THIS is the story of a young American, a poet of considerable promise, who, being in France at the outbreak of the war, joined the Foreign Legion, and at the end of something less than two years of service laid down his life nobly and uncomplainingly in the attack on Belloy-en-Santerre. A friend contributes an account of the last scene: "Mortally wounded, it was his fate to see his comrades pass him in their splendid charge and to forego the supreme moment of victory to which he had looked forward through so many months of bitterest hardship and trial. Together with those other generous wounded of the *Legion fallen*, he cheered on the fresh files as they came up to the attack, and listened anxiously for the cries of triumph which should tell of their success." His body lies buried in the battlefield, awaiting how many comrades of his own people yet to come and to suffer!

The incidents of his service in the trenches, in the rear, and on the field are told with vivid detail in fragments of a diary, and in letters home and to the *New York Sun*. Perhaps the most original passages are those which give glimpses into the soul of the poet, rather than of the soldier—particularly those which relate his experience while quartered in the cellars of a ruined château:

"More than he who looks for the morning!" Never have I realized the force of this verse as in the interminable fourteen hours of these winter nights. It is heralded now by the morning star. In the last hours of darkness, amid the summer constellations just beginning to appear, the beautiful planet rises, marvellous, resplendent. Not long after the green glow of dawn mantles over the east. The landscape begins to grow visible, the black spots come out in all their innocuous detail. The little groups of men return to the central post. Here the relieving squad comes up before the stars have completely disappeared, and the tired watchers are free to return to the château.

And so the same far-off serenity encompasses and encourages the fighters of to-day as was seen from "the bridge of war" at Troy, when, as Homer wrote,

The immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine.

But the real interest of this little book is not so much in the descriptions of trench life, of which we are getting abundance, nor yet in the glimpses of poetry, as in the psychological conditions which threw this young American into the war and made him glory in his experiences. For-

tunately, a long letter, written from a hospital to an unnamed young woman, gives a frank account of the working of his mind. As a college student at Harvard, he describes himself as a devotee of learning for learning's sake. He shut himself off completely from the life of the University, scoffing at the ordinary pleasures of the undergraduate and feeling no need of comradeship. He led the life of a bookish anchorite. And then came the rude and sudden awakening. Like the young men of Balzac's novels, the first glimpse of the world left him *ébloui*. He was haunted by an image that destroyed immediately the peace of mind, the singleness of purpose, the power of concentration, so essential to the intellectual life. From the beginning he had been caught by the mediæval formula of the three categories, the lust for knowledge, the lust for feeling, the lust for power. And now, with the vision of the world's life cast up before him, the pursuit of knowledge is bereft of meaning and satisfaction, and he is caught by the full sweep of the lust for feeling. And so he ends his letter with this bit of advice to his correspondent:

If ever you find yourself suddenly devoured by the divine passion, consult only your heart. Yield to your instincts. Possessed by the force which holds the stars in their orbits, you cannot err. For it is Nature that is asserting itself in you, and in Nature alone is truth. What though your abandonment to it bring deception and unhappiness. You have yet enriched your life with some particle of a beauty that can never fade.

For himself the opportunity of pressing the moment full with emotion came, not with love, but with the outbreak of war. The dedication to love alone, he says of himself, is good as far as it goes, but it goes only half way, and his aspiration was to "drink life to the lees." His interest in life was passion, his object to experience it in all rare and refined, in all intense and violent forms. The war having broken out, it was natural that he should have staked his life on learning what it alone would teach. And so he became a soldier. His motive was not hatred of the Germans; he was in fact an admirer of Teutonic institutions. Nor did the conflict possess for him any clear moral issue. "Peoples war," he says, "because strife is the law of nature and force the ultimate arbitrament among humanity no less than in the rest of the universe. He is on the side he is fighting for, not in the last analysis from ethical motives at all, but because destiny has set him in such a constellation." Being where he is, a man's part is to play the game boldly and honorably, as a cosmic gambler, so to speak, whose reward is in the intensity of the feelings aroused, no matter whether in the end he or death be the victor.

Let us admit that there is nothing mean or small in such a way of facing the issues of life and death, that it has the glow of youthful magnanimity; but is there not also in it something a little saddening? We speak not from the point of view of the pacifist; for the war is here, to be fought to its grim end. Our sadness, such as we feel, is rather a feeling of futility. Why was it that a youth of Seeger's keen intellectual interests should have suddenly found his pursuit of knowledge empty and meaningless? Why should so spirited a soul have left college with no central philosophy as an anchor against the winds of the world, with no sense of values save that which he drank in from the current Epicureanism? He thought, alas, he was pursuing glory and happiness; it is only too clear, to one who reads between the lines, that he was seeking escape from the ter-

rible *ennui* of pleasure, and hoping to find in a soldier's obedience the healthful discipline of limitations which he had never learned at school. Of what avail is it to instruct a man in economics and government and biology and poetry and art and history, if he never learn the truth of his soul? Somehow we must get philosophy back into our schools or we are undone. Nor is there any avail in the trifling of pragmatism or the filth of Freudianism as these are taught in Seeger's college. There is a bitter truth for our philosophers themselves to learn before philosophy can be made again the centre of a truly humanistic education.

A Biography of Grant

Ulysses S. Grant. By Louis A. Coolidge. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

PROFESSOR COOLIDGE has written an entertaining biography, more informing upon the civil than upon the military side of the subject. About two-thirds of its pages are given to that part of General Grant's career which came after the Civil War, an arrangement which suggests that the book was planned in a period of profound peace, when interest in warfare was at a low ebb, and the thought was fondly cherished that there would be no more wars. In General Grant's case such a view of the relative importance of his work as a soldier and his career as President could not have been sound even in the most peaceful times. Nor is the existence of many military biographies of General Grant a good reason for minimizing the story of his war service. His previous biographies have been written by eulogists, not by military students, and most of them have followed, as does Mr. Coolidge, that American Boswell whom General Francis A. Walker called the "spiteful Badeau." General James H. Wilson cleared the way to greater frankness in the portrayal of General Grant's strength and his weaknesses, and Mr. Coolidge balances the account fairly and well outside of the military sphere, with which he manifests a not very intimate knowledge. The books to which he refers as authorities in this sphere, some of them like his own book interesting, some of them merely pleasing, some of them abounding in error, a few of them books like Badeau's and Sheridan's, not to be relied upon unless supported by more trustworthy witnesses, make up upon the whole a somewhat curious list.

There is no indication in the preface or the text that Mr. Coolidge has read General Humphreys's "Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65," the one narrative of scientific accuracy and understanding of Grant's last campaign; Colonel Carswell McClellan's "Grant Versus the Record," published by Houghton Mifflin Co. in 1887; General Walker's "History of the Second Corps"; Archibald Gracie's "Chickamauga," or the careful narrative compiled by the Comte de Paris of the Chickamauga battle. The Comte de Paris says that Sheridan rode away from the battlefield of Chickamauga, as McCook and Crittenden did. Grant in his "Memoirs" says that McCook and Crittenden rode away from the field, but he was silent as to Sheridan's conduct, and Mr. Coolidge follows Grant's "Memoirs." To have stated the fact would have run counter to his contention that Sheridan was one of the four great Union generals. It may be explained that McCook and Crittenden were relieved from command, a fate from which Sheridan was spared,

it appears, by Grant's protecting friendship manifested here and many times elsewhere.

Even with regard to General Butler, in whose behalf nobody will make the claim of competent generalship, Mr. Coolidge's narrative is made inaccurate by his close adherence to writers all of whom have been extremely hostile to Butler for political, social, personal, and in a minor way military reasons. Before the '64 campaign opened, Grant wrote to Butler that Lee's army and Richmond would be the main objectives, a double objective differing from the single one of destroying Lee's army usually attributed to Grant. Again, on April 2, Grant gave Butler definite instructions to move to City Point and to intrench. He reiterated that Richmond would be Butler's main objective, and he emphasized the necessity of holding closely to the south bank of the James River, and held out the hope that between the two coöperating armies Lee would be forced into the Richmond intrenchments. Butler's army numbered only some 30,000 men. Petersburg is twenty-two miles from the James River. The theory that Butler could have taken Petersburg and ended the war is an afterthought which disregards Grant's orders to Butler to move towards Richmond and to hold closely to the south bank of the James River. Other Union generals in Virginia at a much earlier time had had Petersburg in mind. In 1862 General Meade had written that the adherence to the overland route was a mistake, and that the correct movement was to cut the railways running to Richmond from the South and the Southwest. Eventually, after Grant's abandonment of his first chosen route, the line of operations favored by Meade in 1862 was adopted. But in April, 1864, Petersburg does not seem to have been in General Grant's mind. There are, however, far greater generals than Butler, much abler commanders than Sheridan, whose achievements in the Civil War as compared to those of Grant's favorite were as Waterloo to Bloemfontein. To one of the more skilful army commanders, General Meade, Mr. Coolidge reapplies an undervaluation handed down from the "spiteful" Badeau and accepted with zest by writers who, in the interest of particular fames, were well pleased to give further circulation to those outright misstatements, unmerited eulogies, and unfounded aspersions which Badeau first put into a long-discredited book.

Mr. Coolidge is more at home in his narrative of General Grant's more easily comprehended private and political life. He contrasts its successes and failures, important achievements and sorry mistakes, comforting conditions on the one side and sorrows and disasters on the other, with much skill. It is true that the Reconstruction period is still treated as if it had been possible by the enactment of laws different from those actually adopted and by methods other than those which were actually applied to the Southern States to accomplish the miracle of peoples divided by many years upon political and economic questions, followed by four years of war, at once resuming harmonious relations and behaving towards each other like "perfect gentlemen."

There are timely and much-needed words of condemnation of certain present-day attempts in novels and moving pictures to glorify the notorious Ku-Klux organization, and there is an unexpected recognition of the strength of character and directness of method of the group of "stalwart" Senators composed of Conkling, Cameron, Morton, Chandler, and a few others. There could well have been a brief