

THE BOOK TABLE

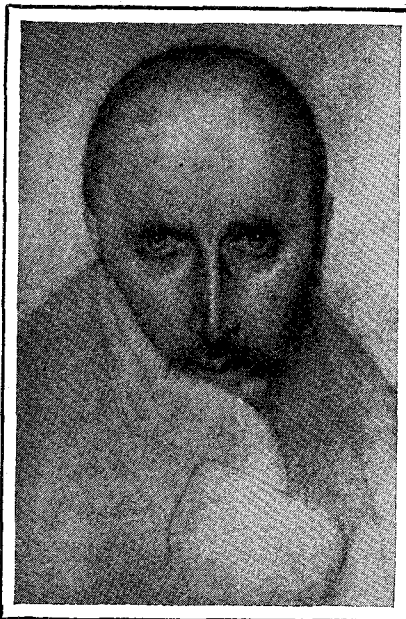
ROMAIN ROLLAND: THE MAN AND HIS WORK

A MASSIVE and luminous biographical portrait of Jean-Christophe's author is achieved by Stefan Zweig in "Romain Rolland: The Man and His Work."¹ It is the first biography of Rolland in English. It combines the charm of rich objective delineation with a persuasive revelation of Rolland, the artist.

From Rolland's boyhood, a physically frail one, it appears that music has nurtured and sustained him. His mother taught him the piano. When he was ill as a child and death seemed near, "a melody from Mozart watched over his pillow." "Whenever my spirit is weary, whenever I am sick at heart, I turn to my piano and bathe in music," says the novelist; a day rarely elapses without his "holding converse" with Beethoven. Shakespeare he discovered as a boy in a dusty loft. From Shakespeare and Beethoven he inherited a passionate admiration for greatness, and something of his own will to greatness, and the ability "to know life and yet to love it." Because of his preoccupation with these two masters he failed twice in the entrance examination to the normal school.

At twenty-two Rolland had added a third great idol, Tolstoy, the publication of whose savage attack on art entitled "What Is to Be Done?" presently racked the young aesthete with frightful doubts and uncertainties. Sitting down one day in his attic, the troubled youth wrote Tolstoy an impulsive letter, describing his perplexities and bewilderment. In time came Tolstoy's answer to his unknown correspondent—thirty-eight pages of long-hand written in French, an entire treatise. Rolland's cry had profoundly impressed the Russian. "It has touched me to the heart. I have read it with tears in my eyes," wrote Tolstoy, and then expounded his idea that only that art was of value which bound men together. "The hour when Tolstoy wrote to his unknown correspondent," observes the biographer, "has been revived in a thousand letters from Rolland to a thousand unknowns."

One beholds Rolland laying the foundations of his art upon the "hidden masonry of years spent in isolation," his life the continuous struggle of one who "cannot come to terms with mediocrity." One sees him laboring in an attic room "small and simple as a monastic cell," first as a student, then as an unrecognized dramatist and a professor of musical history, and even now that fame has overtaken him and he holds a Nobel Prize for literature. In 1912 Romain Rolland was still unknown; in 1914, shortly before he had attained his fiftieth year, with the publication of "Jean-



Bain

ROMAIN ROLLAND, FROM A DRAWING BY GRANIE

Christophe" his fame broke upon the world like a flood.

Zweig gives us an unforgettable picture of Rolland at his work in two tiny attic rooms in the heart of Paris, up five flights of winding wooden stairs:

Amid the books sits the gentle monk of this cell, soberly clad like a clergyman. He is slim, tall, delicate looking; his complexion is sallow, like that of one who is rarely in the open. His face is lined, suggesting that here is a worker who spends few hours in sleep. His whole aspect is somewhat fragile—the sharply cut profile which no photograph seems to reproduce perfectly; the small hands,

his hair silvering behind the lofty brow; his mustache falling softly like a shadow over the thin lips. Everything about him is gentle: his voice in its rare utterances; his figure which, even in repose, shows the traces of his sedentary life; his gestures, which are always restrained; his slow gait. His whole personality radiates gentleness. The casual observer might derive the impression that the man is debilitated or extremely fatigued, were it not for the way in which the eyes flash ever and again from beneath the slightly reddened eyelids. . . . The small and frail body radiates the mysterious energy of work. . . .

The ardor of our recluse is all-embracing, reaching forth to include the cultures of every tongue, the history, philosophy, poesy, and music of every nation. He is in touch with all endeavors. He receives sketches, letters, and reviews concerning everything. . . . With his small, upright handwriting in which all the letters are clearly and powerfully formed, he permanently fixes the thoughts that pass through his mind, whether spontaneously arising or coming from without. . . . His thriftily collected hoard of these autographic intellectual goods is enormous. The flame of his labor burns unceasingly. Rarely does he take more than five hours' sleep; seldom does he go for a stroll in the adjoining Luxembourg; infrequently does a friend climb the five flights of winding stair for an hour's quiet talk.

There are a few passages in which the biographer's explicitness recedes before his personal affection for Rolland. The disaster of Rolland's brief marriage is only hinted at. But the brilliant warmth with which Stefan Zweig reveals many of the inner workings of genius is vastly satisfying to any student of literature and of the men who create it. NEWTON FUESSELE.

THE NEW BOOKS

FICTION

BRIDGE ACROSS (THE). By L. Allen Harker. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$1.75.

Mrs. Harker's Raby in this story is as truly girl-like as her Allegra in a former tale. She is impetuous and tomboyish, therefore delightful to know. Her troubles with her cynical and drug-ridden but somehow attractive father, her wartime experiences and bachelor girl life in London, and finally her love story make up an agreeable romance.

DAUGHTER OF THE MIDDLE BORDER (A). By Hamlin Garland. Illustrated. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$2.

In this agreeably written narrative Mr. Garland carries on the semi-biographical record of "A Son of the Middle Border" in an equally readable manner. Particularly interesting is the account of his friendship with Mr. Howells and John Burroughs. The publishers are right in saying that this is an auto-

biographic record which reads like a novel but which is in fact a part of the intimate social history of midland America.

HELEN'S BABIES. By John Habberton. Memorial Edition. The Stewart & Kidd Company, Cincinnati, Ohio. \$3.

HELEN'S BABIES. By John Habberton. The F. A. Stokes Company, New York. Memorial Edition. \$2.50.

As the two titles above show, two memorial editions have appeared of "Helen's Babies." The first edition was published about forty-five years ago. It achieved an enormous success, and it almost seemed that the author's jocular dedication was to be realized—he dedicated it "To all fathers and mothers, each of whom possesses the best children that ever lived," gently suggesting that each such father and mother should purchase a copy. Mr. Habberton was a newspaper man; he died less than a

¹ Romain Rolland: The Man and His Work. By Stefan Zweig. Thomas Seltzer, New York. \$4.

year ago. He was always fond of little children and delighted in inventing games to play with them. One of the memorial editions states that he was kind-hearted, generous; a man of small business ability, so that the profits from the half million copies of "Helen's Babies" that were sold either never reached him at all or slipped away from him. Both these editions present colored pictures of the characters.

JUGO-SLAV STORIES. Translated by Pavle Popovic. (The Interpreters' Series.) Duffield & Co., New York. \$2.

These nine stories by the greatest of modern Serbian writers are correctly described as giving an extraordinarily vivid and true picture of the life and the soul of the Serbian people to-day. They deal with every side of the national life, and range from tragedy to comedy, and from legend to the most up-to-date realism.

NOBODY'S MAN. By E. Phillips Oppenheim. Illustrated. Little, Brown & Company, Boston. \$2.

We do not know how many stories Mr. Oppenheim has written, but we happen to note the fact that twenty-nine of his books have been reviewed in this department. His popularity is not at all on the wane, but we frankly express our judgment that this particular book would not rank high as compared with those that have appeared since the war ended. It is less exciting and "gripping" than "The Great Impersonation" and less entertaining than is "Jacob's Ladder." Perhaps this is because it deals chiefly with English politics and only incidentally with detection of criminals.

TO HIM THAT HATH. By Ralph Connor. The George H. Doran Company, New York. \$1.75.

This deals largely with industrial and social problems and, like all of the author's stories, is inspired by wide human sympathy and belief in mutual effort for advance and accomplishment. The scene is the Canadian Northwest. There are stirring incidents and tense situations.

HISTORY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

HISTORY OF VERMONT. By Walter Hill Crockett. Illustrated. 4 vols. The Century History Company, Inc., New York. \$31.50.

This history of the great-little State of Vermont gives in elaborate detail the story of the State from its beginnings. It is the result of much research, and should become a "household word" in the families of loyal Vermonters. The type is exceptionally readable, and there are numerous illustrations.

MUSIC, PAINTING, AND OTHER ARTS

ART AND ARTISTS OF INDIANA. By Mary Q. Burnet. Illustrated. The Century Company, New York. \$8.

Indiana has become prominent in literature and the author wishes us to appreciate what prominence it has in painting. The period covered is that of over a century; it includes the New Harmony Settlement, the itinerant portrait painters, the earliest art school of the Middle West, and, finally, the artists of Indiana who, having studied abroad,

have returned to interpret the beauty of their native State.

ROBERT HENRI. His Life and Works. Edited by William Yarrow and Louis Bouche. Illustrated. Privately Printed. Boni & Liveright, New York. \$10.

As we are told in this sumptuous volume, Robert Henri's work is uneven, for he does not always succeed in finding the abstract basis upon which to build his picture. But when he does succeed, as he often does, "the result is not proclaimed by the manner of his painting but by the completeness of his conception." Certainly no one can look at the forty reproductions of Henri's work in this book without feeling in the presence of something very vivacious and vigorous.

PICTORIAL LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY.

By the Photo Pictorialists of Buffalo. Illustrated. The American Photographic Publishing Company, Boston. \$3.50.

All students of pictorial photography will like to own this book, which describes the methods in general use for "controlling the photograph"—in other words, for producing the diffused and sometimes beautiful effects which are to be seen in all current exhibitions of "advanced work" in photography. Some of the numerous reproductions shown in this volume are very pleasing, many others suffer from faint printing, but all will whet the reader's interest and make him wish to see the originals. The



From "Robert Henri; His Life and Works." Reproduced by permission of Boni & Liveright

CATHERINE

text, while largely technical, is on the whole clear and informative.

BIOGRAPHY

SILHOUETTES OF MY CONTEMPORARIES. By Lyman Abbott. Doubleday, Page & Co., New York. \$3.

The papers from Dr. Abbott's pen which have appeared in *The Outlook* under the general title "Snap-Shots of My Contemporaries" have been gathered with others in this volume. In addition to the sketches which appeared in *The Outlook* the volume contains similar sketches of John Fiske, General William Booth, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. The publishers have given the volume the advantage of clear type and attractive binding.

Dr. Abbott in his preface describes his use of the title "Silhouettes" as indicating his effort "to trace in outline the portraits of some of my contemporaries," thus making a volume which should be a gallery of shadow pictures. One reviewer, Mr. Willis Fletcher Johnson, in the New York "Tribune," in an appreciative and friendly article, takes exception to the title of the book because "a silhouette is a portrait showing just one side of the subject and without a touch of color or gradation of light and shade and without the slightest background or environment. But these pen-portraits of a few of the great men whom he has known in a lifetime of more than eighty years are vastly more than that."