

Speaking of Books

Edited by FRANCES LAMONT ROBBINS

The Enterprising Burglar and Others

Life and Death in Sing Sing, by Lewis E. Lawes: Doubleday, Doran.
Passion, Murder and Mystery, by Bruce Graeme: Doubleday, Doran.
Crime on the Continent, by Horace Wyndham: Little, Brown.
Chicago May, by May Churchill Sharpe: The Macaulay Co.
Murder Will Out, by George E. Minot: Marshall Jones.
Spies, by Joseph Gollomb: Macmillan.

LEWIS E. LAWES, warden of Sing Sing, has written an interesting and an important book. Ex-president of the National Wardens' Association and of the American Prison Association, the American delegate to the International Prison Congress, and continuously at the head of Sing Sing for the past eight years, Mr. Lawes speaks with authority. In the present book, he discusses crime in its legal and philosophic aspects, the criminal as he is known to the expert and the tyro, the courts, prisons and the death penalty. Mr. Lawes went to Sing Sing in favor of capital punishment: he is now one of its strongest and sanest opponents. Space is lacking here to review this book as it should be reviewed. Enough to say that it is fascinatingly interesting and of the very first importance.

"Passion, Murder and Mystery" presents the stories of fourteen crimes, all of them French, all of them interesting and most of them stodgily written. To the lover of mysteries and the amateur criminologist the book will be welcome. Most of the crimes are not well known in this country, so that the volume avoids the duplication that often mars books of this type and makes many of them a mere re-serving of old stuff in a different guise.

Horace Wyndham, with his "Crime on the Continent" offers better fare. Mr. Wyndham is an old and reliable hand at this game. He knows crime, enjoys it and has an intelligent point of view on it. The ten crimes he tells of here are distributed through seven countries, and while geographical diversion has little to do with criminological traits we nevertheless get a varied menu. This is a well written and an entertaining book. The story of the strange series of murders committed by Franz Riembauer in the Germany of

1807 is alone worth the price of admission.

Chicago May, once known as the Queen of Crooks, has written the story of her life, and a drab enough story it is. The truth is that May was never a great crook. She was a hanger-on, a

The Most Discussed Books

THIS list is compiled from the lists of the ten best-selling volumes sent us by wire by the following book-shops each week:

New York—Brentano's;
 Rochester—Scrantom's Inc.;
 Cleveland—Korner & Wood;
 St. Louis—Scruggs, Vandervoort, & Barney;
 Denver—Kendrick Bellamy Company;
 Houston—Teolin Pillot Company;
 San Francisco—Paul Elder & Co.;
 Baltimore—Norman, Remington Company;
 Kansas City—Emery Bird Thayer;
 Atlanta—Miller's Book Store;
 Los Angeles—Bullock's;
 Chicago—Marshall Field & Co.;
 Cincinnati—Stewart Kidd;
 Portland, Oregon—J. K. Gill Company;

Fiction

Harness, by A. Hamilton Gibbs: Little, Brown & Co. The "old things" still carry on in this story of a post-war couple and the difficulty of mixing careers and matrimony. Reviewed October 31.

The Hounds of God, by Rafael Sabatini: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. This story of the Armada and the Inquisition, a kidnapped girl and a brave hero, is not one of Sabatini's best, but, as usual, the historical background is good. Reviewed November 21.

The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg, by Louis Bromfield: Stokes. The stories, some curious and some sad, but all interesting, of an odd assortment of people. Reviewed Oct. 10.

Old Pybus, by Warwick Deeping: Alfred A. Knopf. This amiable if mechanical story of an old man, his sons and his grandson, will please admirers of Deeping's novels. Reviewed Oct. 10.

The Jealous Gods, by Gertrude Atherton: Horace Liveright. Reviewed in this issue.

Non-Fiction

Goethe, by Emil Ludwig: Putnam. This fine biography adds greatly to the validity of the Ludwig vogue. Reviewed October 3.

The Buck in the Snow, by Edna St. Vincent Millay: Harper's. The latest work of our most popular poetess will delight most readers although it may disappoint the more critical among Miss Millay's admirers. Reviewed Oct. 31.

John Brown's Body, by Stephen Vincent Benet: Doubleday, Doran. This noble attempt at an American epic deserves wide reading. It contains some of the finest of contemporary verse. Reviewed Sept. 5.

The World on One Leg, by Ellery Walter Putnam. This story of a boy who worked and bummed his way around the world in spite of a physical handicap is a combination travel book and success story. Reviewed November 14.

Abraham Lincoln 1809-1858, by Albert J. Beveridge: Houghton, Mifflin, 2 vols. Although by no means as fine as Beveridge's "Marshall," this is an important book. Reviewed October 3.

panel-worker, worker of the badger racket and a general bad egg. She was never in the class of Madame Humbert and Belle Guinness. The un-

initiated will find a deal of information in her book all bearing on the underworld, and even those who are tainted with sin will not be left entirely unsatisfied. May is frank, one can say that for her. But the book needs compression. Instructive, but unedifying. As the first step in honesty one can wish the venture only success.

Mr. Minot of the "Boston Herald" has given us twenty-nine murders, all of them American and most of them New England. In digging into the old records and unearthing interesting material the author has done yeoman service. He is not always accurate, however, and he writes rather badly. Here is a lesser Pearson. Nonetheless, no one who is interested in murder, mystery or in crime in general should miss this book.

Joseph Gollomb can always be trusted to tell a good story, and to tell it well. "Spies" is excellent reading. Beginning with the ancient history of the spy, Mr. Gollomb works his way up through the colonial days of America to the World War. It is really an education in national characteristics, the vivacity of the French, the mechanistic superiority of the Germans, and the dogged sanity of the Anglo-Saxon. They are all here, and they are here in dramatic form. Good stories, well told, nearly four hundred pages of them. The spy is to be congratulated.

EDWARD HALE BIERSTADT.

Spy and Counterspy, by Richard W. Rowan: Viking Press.

THE SEAMIER SIDE of the spy question is exposed in Mr. Rowan's book and historians will have to revise their histories in the light of this acute study of a neglected phase of war. Historians are not to be blamed for this neglect since spies love to work in the dark, but the author is certainly to be congratulated for illuminating their devious ways. He displays with cold logic and great industry the evil necessity for spies; how every European power had its school in which spies were rigorously trained, and how their intrigues, information and misinformation hastened the Great War. The countless heroisms, the sordid bribes,

the incredible devices of the spy for communication, detection and circumvention are patiently sketched. But the idealistic pretensions of even the most innocence-protesting belligerents peel off. Even disarmament breeds spies; the nations must keep watch on each other. We can visualize the spies, while most of us are piously hoping for peace, peering through key-holes, making sketches, stealing plans and calculating the stresses of bridges for the future conveyance of artillery. They ignore the rhetoric; they are too busy preparing the ground for war.

WILLIAM FRAUENGLASS.

Contemporary German Novels

Defeat, by Ricarda Huch: Alfred A. Knopf.

Trenck, by Bruno Frank: Alfred A. Knopf.

The Devil, by Alfred Neumann: Alfred A. Knopf.

Caspar Hauser, by Jacob Wassermann: Horace Liveright.

Prisoners All, by Oskar Maria Graf: Alfred A. Knopf.

THERE can be no doubt that contemporary literature, in spite of a few wild flourishes still remaining, is in a period of reaction into classicism. In French and English, even in American contemporary writing, this time spirit is being manifested in smallness of design, a rigid and frequently overselectiveness and an emphasis upon form. German literature feels the reaction, too, but the expansive nature of German fiction, with its love of detail, does not easily crowd itself into a form small enough to be engraved upon a dime. Selectiveness is not its genius. It must look for other means of revealing what should be called, perhaps, the present, rather than the new, spirit of the literary art; and it has found it in subject matter rather than in design, in a return to the past for its material. Nor is this past in many instances its own—which is a sign of vigor instead of weariness, as the old period of German romanticism shows, and as the animated researches of our own contemporary biographers and historians display. In fact, Italy may almost be said to be the dominating interest of artistic Germany at the

present moment, with all that implies of a return to classicist ideals.

Of the group of German novels under consideration, Ricarda Huch's "Defeat" and Bruno Frank's "Trenck" reveal the classic spirit most significantly. "Defeat" might well be chosen as the most thoroughly representative novel of the classicist ideal in German fiction today. The German method of large design and exhaustive treatment, revealed and explained most beautifully by Thomas Mann, is clearly apparent, for Ricarda Huch has taken as her subject the struggle for Italian liberty, and "Defeat," dealing with the

Lewisohn has described as an "atmosphere of frugal beauty;" and the simplicity of its ending leaves an effect of nobility. But compared to the historical method of the Norwegian Sigrid Undset, with whom inevitably the German writer *has* been compared, to those novels hot with the immediacy and intensity of intimate human passions to which so-called historical events are only a background, the effect of "Defeat" is cold, external and aloof. The noble speeches of the leaders, the deaths of the soldiers, striking a note of exaltation at their best, too frequently have the ring of the patriotic history text for school children. Ricarda Huch executes her epic design with both power and precision; but "Defeat" is a novel which commands respect rather than the immediacy of delight.

To my mind, Bruno Frank's "Trenck," slight as it is in a way, and lacking the sheer exquisiteness of his earlier "The Days of the King," is a far more moving piece of work. Bruno Frank carries out the classicist ideal in the manner of the miniature painter rather than the battle piece painter. His art is concentrated upon the character and times of Frederick the Great, but he works his material into brief and highly finished episodes that have a true Eighteenth Century clarity and a lyrical completeness. I find in his little masterpieces an æsthetic pleasure and a poignant revelation of the character of his hero beside which the big Garibaldi novel leaves me cold.

Alfred Neumann's "The Devil" is simply and solely an historical romance, and after no new pattern, recalling, in fact, some of the romances of Dumas and his followers—fantastic in nature, swiftly readable, thoroughly successful of its kind. Intrigue, medieval color, a character as *deus ex machina*—it employs them all; convincing for the time of reading by reason of the ardor and vigor of its fancy; but quite without the underlying conviction that gives weight and genuine passion to the other novels dis-



Courtesy Kennedy & Co.

EZRA POUND

Woodcut by Zadig

leadership and flight of Garibaldi, is followed by "Victory," a story of Solferino. But the character of the design is plainly that of the thoroughgoing classicist. In fact, this novel, with its largeness of outline and multitude of characters, is much like one of those great battle pieces of painting—grouped men, dying heroes, noble leader and flag over all. Dignity it certainly possesses, dignity of intention and of manner in a certain stern purity of language and what Ludwig