

The Week's Reading

"SINCE Calvary," by Lewis Browne (Macmillan, \$3.50). Lewis Browne, well known as the author of *This Believing World*, gave himself a stiff assignment when he undertook this new volume. *Since Calvary* is nothing less than a history of the Christian religion from the death of Jesus right up to the clash of Mussolini and the Vatican. Considering the well-nigh endless material available, he has done amazingly well in selecting the important facts. He has thrown in enough others that are merely interesting to hold the attention of the average reader. Admittedly this book is but one way of looking at Christian history.

It is, as the sub-title clearly states, an interpretation. It is not an interpretation that will be acceptable to the Roman Catholic, for he goes into much detail concerning the lives of some of the Popes and other high ecclesiastics. Nor is it an interpretation that will be acceptable to most Protestants, for it assumes from beginning to end that there is no supernatural element in Christianity. But it is an interpretation which will be quite acceptable to the rationalist, who sees in the extraordinary rise of the Christian faith simply a fortunate combination of circumstances which permitted this faith in Jesus to rise and spread. Such is the viewpoint of the book, but the author seems at times to feel that this theory is not quite enough to account for the facts, for he says: "How from such beginnings a movement could grow till it dominated half the world is perhaps inexplicable on rational grounds. No matter how painstakingly one may search the sources, and how ingeniously one may interpret the findings, in the end one must confess that the circumstances surrounding the triumph of Christianity were so complex and involved and subtly concatenated as to defy complete analysis."

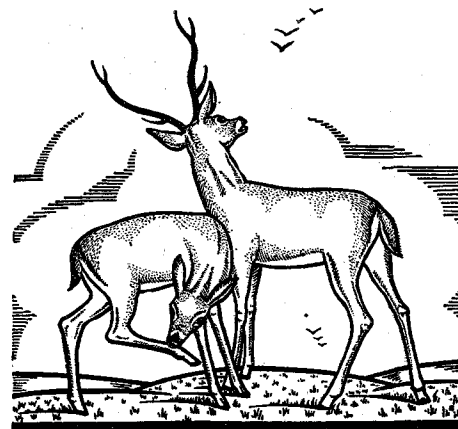
But within the limits and confines of this basic assumption Browne tells about all that can be told. He tells it exceedingly well. He has a positive genius for expressive phrases and brilliant summations. Speaking, for instance, of the contribution of the apostle Paul to the rising faith, he says: "The seed of paganism entered into the womb of Israel, giving rise to a new faith; and Paul's contribution was that of severing the umbilical cord. Had he not been present at that hour the child might possibly have perished . . . But Paul was there and as a consequence Christianity lived." Browne does not do justice to the place of the resurrection in the faith of those first Christian disciples. It was this belief that Jesus

was still alive and would come again which roused them from their despair and gave them the courage to battle against the might of Rome and the jeers of the people. Without this belief in the resurrection the memory of Jesus would not have survived the century of his death. Moreover, there is a bit more to be said for it as an objective fact than the author would suggest. And the same may be said for his treatment of Pentecost.

But Browne is entirely right in emphasizing the appeal which Christianity made to the poor and the down-trodden, to the slaves and the oppressed. He is right, too, in suggesting in his final chapter that Protestantism cannot be a great force in this day unless it is willing to be true to the good news proclaimed by Jesus when he said that he brought that news to the poor. This means in this generation that the Church, both Catholic and Protestant—yes, and the Jewish synagogue—must condemn the iniquity inherent in our entire acquisitive economic system if organized religion is to survive. *Since Calvary* is a highly creditable piece of writing. It is in effect an outline of the history of Christianity. The scholarship displayed is of a high order. It is not the whole truth about the subject, but it is an excellent presentation of one viewpoint, a viewpoint which this reviewer does not share but which he quite admits is becoming increasingly common. Incidentally the book itself is a first-rate sample of the bookmaker's art. The printing is easy to read and the illustrations drawn by the author and his wife are of a high order.

EDMUND B. CHAFFEE.

"LITERARY Criticism in America," by George E. DeMille (Dial Press, \$3.50). The audience for a history of American literary criticism is naturally limited, but more general readers would enjoy this book than are likely to get hold of it. The author begins with an



From "The Merry Ballads of Robin Hood" by Laurabelle Dietrick (Macmillan)

account of the *North American Review*, the first literary journal published in America, modeled as closely as possible after the *Edinburgh Review*, and devoted to the worthy cause of a national literature. The quotations from the reviews printed in its pages—a hundred years ago—are highly entertaining. Further chapters are given to Lowell, Poe, Emerson and Margaret Fuller, Stedman, Henry James, Howells, Huneker and Sherman. Each chapter is followed by a useful bibliography. This reviewer was especially interested in what Mr. DeMille has to say, in his chapter on Huneker, about the effect upon the critic of a Catholic as opposed to a Protestant religious heritage. The whole chapter on Huneker, a critic who has always seemed to this reviewer almost too witty to be profound, is illuminating. Any one seriously interested in American literature will find this book well worth reading.

FRANCES LAMONT ROBBINS.

"CASTLE ISLAND," by R. H. Mottram (Harper and Brothers, \$2.50). Mr. Mottram belongs, spiritually at least, to those people for whom the vanished day is the rosiest. In *Castle Island* he tells the story of a boy who grew up in an English town in the waning years of Victorian prosperity. Stephen Dormer, son of the manager of the town's bank, was about thirteen when he went up in a balloon with his father to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Until then, life had consisted of listening to Father read the newspapers, obeying Mother's serene injunctions, judiciously avoiding too much study at school, eating as often as possible, and prowling across the family's roof to survey his beloved landmarks. Stephen, until the Queen's Jubilee, was wedded to security. Then, surprisingly, hatefully, everything changed. Victoria died; Father was permanently injured in a fire; money and servants disappeared. Taken from his school orbit, he was sped to Europe for a year's befuddled learning, then thrust into clerkship at the bank which was no longer his father's, but, ignominiously, part of a chain.

The rest of Stephen's life, somehow become resentfully unimportant even to the author, is spent in a confused effort to adapt to a new England. The book, juicy and harmonious at its start, changes tenor mid-way. It loses the vitality accumulated in its earlier stages and grows, almost with the turning of the century, plaintive, querulous, and, as it were, disappointed.

VIRGILIA PETERSON ROSS.

Behind the Blurbs

THE Book League's July choice is L. A. G. Strong's *The Garden*. The Scientific Book Club chooses Kirkpatrick and Huettner's *Fundamentals of Health*. *** The Limited Editions Club has announced the names of the twelve books to be issued to its members during its third year. They are: *Alice in Wonderland*, with the Tenniel illustrations; Franklin's *Autobiography*; *South Wind*, ill. by Carlotta Petrina; a new translation of Faust, ill. by René Clarke; Balzac's *Droll Stories*, in a new translation; *The Last of the Mohicans*, ill. by Edward Wilson; *Jorrock's Jaunts and Jollities*, ill. by Gordon Ross; *The Cloister and the Hearth*, ill. by Lynd Ward; *The Chimes*, ill. by Rackham; *Tom Jones*, ill. by Alexander King; Hearn's *Kwaidan*, ill. by Foujita; and *The Analects of Confucius*. *** Some of the best ghost stories ever written were included in *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, by M. R. James, and the three vols. that succeeded it. These have now been collected in one volume¹. No one has ever understood better how to make a ghost story convincing by the piling up of detail—detail which is interesting in itself. We don't see how you can get along without this one. *** The newsbreaks which the *New Yorker* uses as fillers are probably familiar to you. Several hundred of these have now been brought together in *Ho Hum*², which, taken in small doses, is one of the funniest books of the year. The comments by the editors which accompany these typographical and cerebral errors are very entertaining. *** Wild, woolly and incredible are the exploits of Slim Jim Gerald, noble gambler and gunman, who, saved by the lovely Louise from a pursuing mob, in turn saves Louise from the machinations of her wicked Cousin Edgar. *The Killers*³ is exciting and will kill an hour's wait at the junction for you quite painlessly. *** *Imperial Treasure*⁴ concerns itself with \$50,000,000 in gold, on which Feng, the Mongol, hoped to found a Pan-Asiatic Empire. The Russians, represented by Sabin, Anzarakhi, Badoglio and Krylenko, are after the money, but so are the British, whose champions are two Poles and a lovely American spyess. Of course, both Feng and the Reds crash down in a common ruin, but before this happens there are plenty of plots and escapes and perilous adventures to keep you sitting on the edge of the chair as you turn the pages.

WALTER R. BROOKS.

1. Collected Ghost Stories: Longmans, \$3.00.
2. Farrar & Rinehart, \$1.00.
3. By George Owen Baxter: Macaulay, \$2.00.
4. By Val Gielgud: Houghton Mifflin, \$2.00.

Music

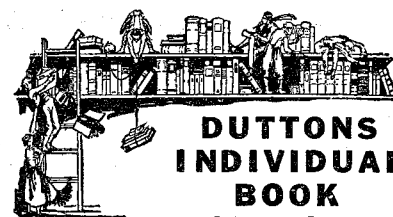
Notable New Recordings

PROBABLY a language course does not come strictly under the head of music, but so amazing to me are the courses which are published by the Linguaphone Institute, 24-27 High Holborn, London, that I feel justified in going into a description of them.

I am quite aware that the gramophone has been used for a long time as an aid in learning languages, but it has never been my luck before to come across anything so admirably arranged. To begin with, the complete conversational Linguaphone course in whatever language you choose to learn is packed in a compact case, with a convenient strap for carrying it, whose overall dimensions are eleven by eleven by three inches. As good portable phonographs are not much bigger than that, it is, therefore, easy to take the whole business with you while traveling. Within the case are fifteen double-sided ten-inch records which allow for thirty lessons. In each lesson an eminent native teacher of the language you are studying talks about a different aspect of life in that country, for example, the family, a visit, in the railway station, the theatre, etc. Along with each lesson on the record, in a small book which is in the case, is a picture of the scene of the talk. Opposite the picture is found the printed text, and each word which refers to an object in the picture is numbered and the corresponding number is found on the object in the picture. Thus you listen to the scene being described and learn, at your leisure, to connect the properly spoken sounds visually with the objects to which they refer. This is the most natural way possible as it is exactly what happens to every one when he learns his own language as a child.

Naturally, provision is made for written exercises and the study of the grammar in much the same way that such things are done in ordinary schools. However, the most obvious advantages to the Linguaphone method are that you can take your time about it and learn as quickly or as slowly as you need without having anybody's patience to test but your own, and that you need never hear a word improperly pronounced and you can play the records over and over as often as you like until you understand them perfectly and can pronounce the words properly yourself. There is, unfortunately, not yet a branch of the Linguaphone Institute in America, but the courses can be bought from various large phonograph record dealers.

O. C-T.



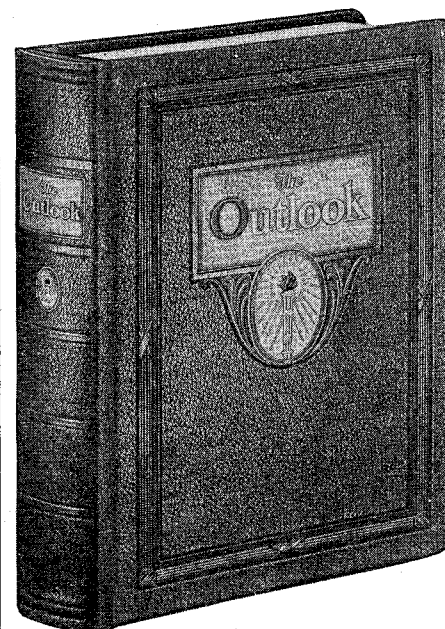
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