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The New Books Fiction

(Continued from preceding page)

THE HOLLY HEDGE. By TEMPLE BAILEY. Penn. 1925. \$2.

This gaily clad little volume contains between its covers five Christmas stories two of them adapted to the understanding of young folk and the remaining three intended for their elders. All are steeped in holiday sentiment, and all are interesting even though there is too obvious an insistence on "the peace on earth, good will to men" theme. Miss Bailey can convey the spirit of good cheer and the succulence of Christmas. That she casts the tales in an old mould, re-dressing, them is less to be depreciated in such stories than of another type.

Poetry

YULE FIRE: An Anthology of Christmas Poems. By MARGUERITE WILKINSON. Macmillan. 1925. \$2.50.

Here, for once, is an anthology which requires neither self-justification nor

apology from the compiler. Mrs. Wilkinson's purpose, to bring together in a single volume all the best poems about Christmas, is excellent and certainly fulfils a need. The same cannot be said of nine out of ten of recent anthologies. Mrs. Wilkinson has done her work almost as well as it could have been done, setting a standard high enough to exclude any specimen of those thousand-and-one poems which tend to stray into literature though their proper place is on the Christmas Greeting Cards. Possibly her choice of carols might have been fortunately extended to include a few of the cruder pieces that belong to folklore rather than to literature itself. Many, such as "The Bitter Withy," though not actually poems of the Nativity are nevertheless poems of Christmas. Otherwise the most notable omission is John Masefield's "Christmas at Sea" which should certainly have found a place in the book. In a second edition (which Mrs. Wilkinson deserves) she should also include Frank Kendon's "Christmas Eve," perhaps the most beautiful of recent poems on the old theme. But she could not have known of this at the time the book was compiled. Her prefatory essay could be improved by some discriminating cuts and elisions. At present it has a labored air and sometimes falls into false simplicity. Mrs. Wilkinson has caught something of the manner of Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne. Her prose tones are not her own and the result is often irritating. But she has much to say that is true and interesting and her book, as a whole, deserves high praise.

LADDERS THROUGH THE BLUE. By HERMANN HAGEDORN. Doubleday, Page. 1925. \$1.50.

While on the whole this collection of lyrics does not rise to the level of the

best that Mr. Hagedorn has previously done, yet its quality is sufficiently high to reaffirm his place among that small coterie of contemporary Americans whose poetry really counts. It may safely be said that pieces such as "The Ghost" and "The Eyes of God" would do credit to any poet now living; and there are a sufficient number of such poems to lend the volume a distinction far above the average. At all times Mr. Hagedorn is a careful workman, and at his best he is a lyricist of a pure and ethereal quality; and while the reader may feel that in many of the selections he falls far below his highest attainment, yet one will also be persuaded that he has written little if anything that is without poetic quality, and little if anything that has not some claim upon one's attention.

THE TOP O' THE COLUMN. By KEITH PRESTON. Pascal Covici. 1925. \$2.

The verse of newspaper columnists, written for the passing hour, does not often survive the passing hour in interest. The work of Keith Preston is no exception to the rule; yet if one turns to his volume not expecting too much but desirous of a little amusement, one is not apt to be disappointed. There is cleverness in many of these verses, although many others are tawdry and cheap; there is occasionally an outburst of real and telling irony, occasionally a passage of genuine caustic point, occasionally the flash of an idea worthy of appearance in better company. And undeniably there is humor—now and then quite effective humor, wasted, alas! on themes whose interest cannot survive next year or the year after next. Mr. Preston is to be seen at his best in his epigrams, of which a typical example is "The Destiny That Shapes Our Ends." *Imperial Caesar dead and turned to clay
Estopped a hole to keep the wind away;
The great god Ra whose shrine once covered acres
Is filler now for cross-word puzzle makers.*

WINDS AND TIDES. By JULIET CALHOUN ISHAM. Putnam's. 1925. \$1.50.

Platitudes in undistinguished verse of a faintly Tennysonian flavor; as, for example, *He looked into the wasting west
Across a purple field of sea;
"Of all my loves, I've loved the best
The one that—loved not me—Ah me!"*

Religion

"S. AUGUSTINI DE CIVITATE DEI LIBRI XXII." Edited by J. E. C. WELLDON. Macmillan, 2 vols. 1925. \$15.

The publishers of this work render all lovers of scholarship in America their debtors by the importation of this splendid edition of the *magnum opus* of the greatest of the Latin Fathers. Dean Welldon tells us that the preparation of this book cost him not a little time and pains, but they have certainly borne fruit.

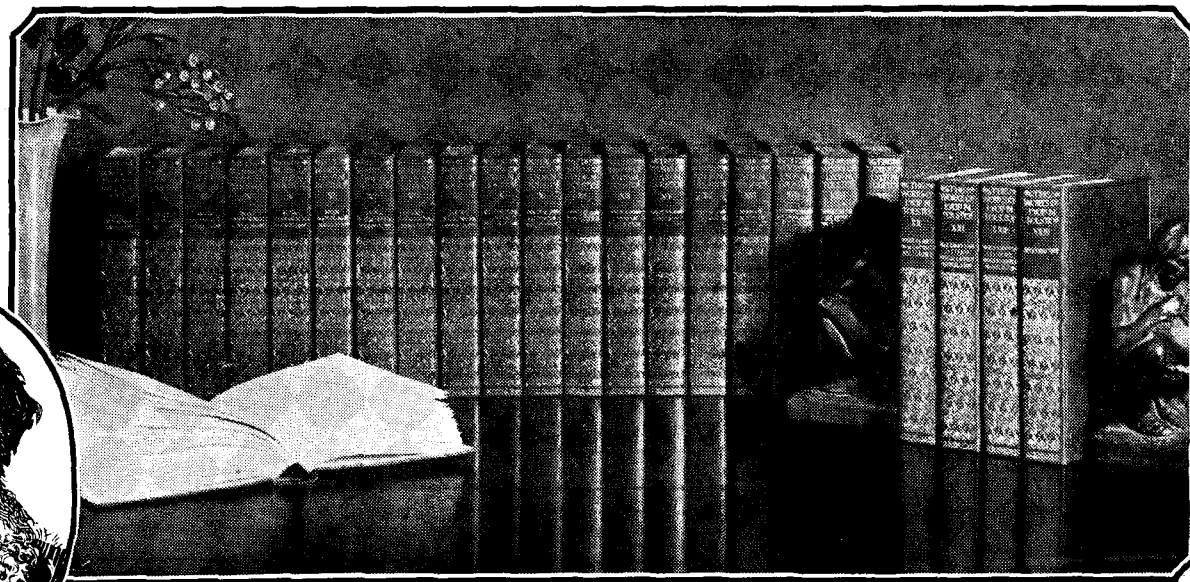
These two volumes contain an accurate and carefully collated text in the original Latin together with a running commentary in the form of footnotes in English. The Dean has had notable success in "steering a course between excess and defect in a commentary on such a book as the 'De Civitate Dei.'" The notes, while full of erudition and giving many collateral references, are of moderate compass and entirely free from academic pedantry.

Of the value of such a work to the student of theology or ecclesiastical history it is not necessary to say anything here. However, it is possible that the importance of the "De Civitate Dei" to the student of Latin literature is not so generally recognized. St. Augustine is one of the most influential and powerful links between the old classical world and the new world that was to come after his time; he had become a Christian while the classical tradition was still strong and, as Mackall remarks in his "Latin Literature," it was in the hands of men like Jerome and Augustine that this tradition "was caught up from the wreck of the Empire and handed down, not unimpaired, yet still in prodigious force and vitality to the modern world." In a valuable appendix to volume II Dean Welldon deals with St. Augustine's literary style and illustrates its idiosyncrasies by a collection of phrases and sentences from the body of the work.

A special word of praise is due to the Introduction, explaining the structure and spirit of St. Augustine's book, and also to the appendices treating chiefly of certain theological aspects of the subject matter.

(Continued on page 438)

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The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Readers are invited to send in the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to Mrs. Becker, c/o The Saturday Review.

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE
BROOKLYN AND OTHER TALES. By Walter de la Mare (Knopf).
AMERICAN. By Milton Waldman (Holt).
ISRAEL. By Ludwig Lewisohn (Boni & Liveright).

P.H.B., New York, asks for a book of travel for reading aloud; it may take the reader anywhere so long as it does so pleasantly.

STELLA BENSON'S "The Little World" (Macmillan) takes him into all sorts of faraway places, China and Indo-China, Japan, and the less-frequented sections of the United States. These unconventional sketches kept the readers of a London daily in touch with the ends of the earth and will do the same for a book-audience. "New York in Seven Days," by H. S. Dayton and L. B. Barratt (McBride), is intended for field use, and the daring way in which it gives actual addresses of shops and eating places—just the addresses in which visitors are most interested—makes it uncommonly useful in action, but it could be read aloud pleasantly too. There are two new ones from China; in one Harry Franck moves down on the map and gives us "Roving Through Southern China" (Century); the other is a light-running record of travel, "Temple Bells and Silver Sails," by Elizabeth Crump Enders (Appleton), which will be welcomed by those who read her "Swinging Lanterns." "Gone Abroad," by Douglas Goldring (Houghton Mifflin), not only gives us an idea of places as comparatively unvisited by tourists as the Balearic Isles, but will no doubt be taken into the company of classics of travel for its graceful literary style. A travel book that bears on contemporary history is J. H. Nicholson's "The Remaking of the Nations" (Dutton), the story of a tour in 1922 to study the interplay of Eastern and Western civilizations.

T.P.A., New York, returned from a trip to Spain, asks for a history of Spain in English and for advice on the study of her literature.

THE ideal beginning history for an American is Henry Dwight Sedgwick's "A Short History of Spain" (Little, Brown). It has so fascinating a style that even a reader with much else to do will plunge through it scarce stopping, and its methods of introducing writers, not in a section at the end, but as the historical narrative proceeds, is especially appropriate in the case of a country where writers have had so much to do with history. This book left me with so much unexpended interest that I reread S. de Madariaga's "The Genius of Spain" (Oxford), a series of luminous criticisms of contemporary writers, and once more went over a book that gave me, I believe, more insight into the national psychology than anything else I have read on the subject, Miguel de Unamuno's "The Tragic Sense of Life" (Macmillan). I even read the new monograph on "Luis de Leon" (Oxford), by A. F. G. Bell, because he figures largely in history as in literature. There is a new collection of source material, most of which is here available for the first time in translation, in the survey of Old Spanish literature, E. A. Peers's "Spanish Mysticism" (Dutton). George T. Northrup has added to the list of helps for the American student of Spanish writers an "Introduction to Spanish Literature" (University of Chicago), which brings in history as Sedgwick's book brings in literature, to make a connected story of national life. For a survey of that literature at the present time, the latest is "Contemporary Spanish Literature,"

by Aubrey Bell (Knopf), author of the book on Luis de Leon just named. This goes from 1868 to the present day and almost hour, and while scholarly and authoritative, is not too heavy for study-groups in search of such surveys.

E. D. P., New York, asks for new books about London, published since the Reader's Guide Book list.

THERE has been an outburst of London books this year. William Bolitho's "Leviathan" (Harper) gets the color and quality of a great city into brief studies of small parts of it. The top-liner, however, is "The London Perambulator" (Knopf), and no wonder, seeing that the text is by James Bone, correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, and the magnificent illustrations are by Muirhead Bone. The pictures for Sidney Dark's "London," which now appears in a new and less expensive edition (Macmillan), are by Joseph Pennell, and they are more beautiful every time you look at them, but I would like the book better if Mr. Dark could ever forget his King Charles's head, but he does not, whether speaking of Westminster or Thomas Cromwell. "The Heart of London" (Brentano) is by H. V. Morton, a newspaper man and is little sketches of life. "Introducing London," by E. V. Lucas (Doran), is a small book for the traveller, especially such as love to get off the main arteries of travel, where Mr. Lucas is the sprightliest of guides. In "Cities of Many Men" (Houghton Mifflin) H. C. Chatfield Taylor tells of a long acquaintance not only with London, but with Paris, New York, and Chicago. Karl Capek's "Letters from England" (Doubleday, Page) treats London particularly and is one of the most demurely delightful travel books in years. The pictures by the author are just as funny as the text. This is one of the few books about England by a foreigner that England has taken to her heart; or at least she has bought it freely. "The Colour of London: Historic, Personal, and Local," by W. J. Loftie (Dodd, Mead), is one of a series about great cities, quartets beautifully illustrated in color. Another publication of this house is "A Paradise in Piccadilly," by Harry Furniss, the famous caricaturist, with his own illustrations. It is a personal history of this famous street, or rather of one of its byways.

Of recent novels with a London scene the two that seem to me most successful in atmosphere are Naomi Royde-Smith's "The Tortoiseshell Cat" (Boni & Liveright) and Louis Hémon's "M. Ripois and Nemesis" (Macmillan), as unlike as two novels are like to be. The first is in the world of people who range from Chelsea to Kensington, get their cakes at Buzzard's, their furniture at Heal's, and their hot water from an instrument they incredibly pronounce "geezzer." The second takes place mainly in mean streets, more especially those of the foreign sections where hot water is not noticeable; the plot is relentless and grim, and the book another proof that Hémon's genius was not compassed by one gentle and pious romance. But both books are true London.

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