

Foreign Literature

A Panoramic View

SCHWEDISCHE LITERATUR. By HELMUT DE BOOR. Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1924.

Reviewed by ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD

OF the various "series" of books on related subjects, publication of which was discussed during the World War though not actually effected until the close of that episode, none has achieved greater distinction, or deserves more solid praise, than the volumes of "Jedermanns Bücherei," or, in plain English, "Everyman's Library." And of these volumes, Professor De Boor's on Swedish literature must take high rank because of the reasoned conservatism of its views and the degree to which a huge mass of illuminating material has been condensed into little space. This is a small book—116 pages in all—but to know it is to have a clear idea of the evolution of the literature of Sweden from the very early days when her "literature" consisted of such church tracts and unmelodious hymns as had been committed to manuscripts down to the most recent work of Selma Lagerlöf and Erik Axel Karlfeldt, the latter of whom holds at present the unenviable position of Secretary of the Swedish Academy.

Professor De Boor has no delusions regarding the impossible dullness of early Swedish writings; he knows in truth that when Norway and Denmark were able to point to skalds and bards whose works are even now the pride of their respective countries—and the nightmare of university seminars—Sweden was moping about in Latin or in dialects that seem to have been spoken rather than written. Nor can the Swedes of today exult in their first author, Birgitta (1303-1373), whose "visions" were unusual without being valuable. It is not, indeed, until the Reformation, which struck Sweden hard, that such men as Olavus Petri, Johannes Messenius, Lars Wivallius, and others equally obscure, began to "populate the quadrangular white deserts" with thoughts that survive and pictures that uplift. Since then, Swedish literature has gone on its way, rising gradually until we reach the names that made the nineteenth century one of glory for which no price would be too high.

Professor De Boor explains Strindberg's lifelong interest in and frequent reference to electricity on the ground that his own soul and body were as sensitive to impressions as a connected wire. He contends that Selma Lagerlöf's worth and fame are a matter of breadth rather than depth, and that Gustav Fröding, "Sweden's greatest contemporary poet," owed much to Nietzsche.

The volume contains twenty-one illustrations and is unreservedly recommended to anyone who would fondly do with Swedish literature what is being attempted in every other field at present: get a bird's eye view of it.

Bunin's Latest Book

ROSA YERIKHONA. (The Rose of Jericho). By IVAN BUNIN. Berlin: "Slovo" Publishing Co. 1924.

Reviewed by ALEXANDER I. NAZAROFF

A RUSSIAN reviewer has called this book an antique chest set in gold, adorned with enamel and incrustations and containing gems of purest quality and finest shape. Unlike the contemporary producers of so many novels a year, the master who has cast his inspirations and dreams into the perfect form of these verbal jewels does not gratify us often with his books; but whatever he does write is a masterpiece, a thing of beauty forever.

In this new volume the author of "The Gentleman from San Francisco" and of "The Dreams of Chang" has assembled twenty-odd short stories that he has written in the course of the last years and that have not yet been translated into English, as well as a score of poems. I have said "short stories," but I do not know whether this is an accurate definition of these inimitable, mostly plotless, pieces some of which might be also called lyrical or philosophical poems in prose, while some others remind one of Biblical songs or old Oriental legends. For I. A. Bunin has not only a style, but also æsthetic forms of his own.

The atmosphere permeating the book is condensed in two introductory pages from which the whole volume takes its title.

As a symbol of eternal life and of resurrection, the Orientals used to put in olden

days the Rose of Jericho into coffins and graves.

For this weed is truly miraculous. Torn off and taken by the pious pilgrim thousands of miles away from its native land, it may lie for years as a dry, gray, dead tuft. But as soon as it is dipped into the water, it begins to revive, its turn green, buds, and shows little pale pink flowers. And the poor human heart rejoices, consoled: there is no death in the world!

O, Rose of Jericho! I dip the stems and the roots of my past into the living water of my heart, into the pure sap of love, sorrow and tenderness, and again, again my miraculous weed buds and blossoms!

Both these symbols, the dead desert and the Rose of Jericho blossoming even in this dead desert, are equally typical of Bunin's art. An indefatigable traveller, who finds equally fragrant and pliant words for depicting his native Russian landlord's manor and the exotic landscape, he combines in his soul "two truths": no writer conveys to the reader a stronger sensation of the eternal, undying joy of life, and no writer makes one feel more keenly that all is "vanity and vexation of spirit." He sympathizes equally with a sixteen year old girl who listens delightedly to the fairy-tale of spring "that has been told already thousands of times to the world" and with the omnipotent Temir-Aksak-Khan who "has lost the desire to desire anything."

It is the strange harmony of these two elements that characterizes more than anything else the world in which Bunin lives and in which he makes his readers live. For Bunin has a distinct world of his own in which the reality and the dream, the dim past of the mankind and the present, the Russian and the eternally international combine without losing their respective individualities. And all these elements are permeated with one all-pervading lyrical tension—so intensely happy and so painfully sorrowful at once—which is typical of Bunin alone, and which is only stressed by the stern modesty and ascetic restraint with which the author chokes and uses his simple words.

Bunin has been unanimously recognized long since as the best living master of Russian prose. Now as some of his masterpieces have been put into English, and especially into French (most of the stories contained in the present volume have already appeared in various French periodicals) he is also rapidly gaining international recognition. But one may be almost sure that he will never win the Nobel prize. He is one of the most remarkable contemporary authors, no doubt. But he has never "struggled against prejudices," or preached disarmament, nor has he ever done other fashionably liberal things that have very little to do with literature. He is not a writer for the masses, either. This, however, does not prevent his present volume from being one of the finest works of art that have appeared in the course of recent years.

Foreign Notes

THERE is shortly to be published in English the complete edition of "The Letters of Anton Pavlovitch Chehov to Olga Knipper," translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett. The letters start with the beginning of Chehov's acquaintance with Olga Knipper, one of the leading actresses at the Art Theatre in Moscow, in 1899, two years before he married her, and continue down to 1904, the year of his death. Only a few were published until last year, when the whole collection was issued in Berlin.

The first volume of "Der Weltkrieg, 1914 bis 1918," a work based on German official archives (Berlin: Mittler), covers the Battles of the Frontier on the Western Front up to August 27, 1914. It is distinctly propagandist in tone and contains no facts that are not fairly well known, but is interesting as representing the German attitude of mind.

In "Netty" (Milan: Mondadori), Virgilio Brocchi, who has to his credit some excellent Italian novels, has produced a sketch of delightful quality. It is the chronicle of a friend of his mother who stood in the relation of aunt to her children, and is a picturesque account of her not unchequered girlhood and the later years of devotion to her friend and her friend's children. It is written with tenderness and sympathy, if in somewhat romantic vein, and is incidentally an interesting portrayal of life in a middle-class Italian family which through a great part of its career was faced with struggle and poverty.

"The Constant Nymph," which is soon to be published in this country, is having a great success among those English readers who are always on the lookout for good new writers. The author, Miss Margaret Kennedy, published about a year ago a story called "The Ladies of Lyndon." It was quite unlike "The Constant Nymph," the scene being laid in an English countryside. "The Constant Nymph" is far more ambitious, and deals with the world of music. The central figure, Albert Sanger, whose personality pervades the book, although he only makes one brief appearance in the story, is a genius, thought by some people to have been drawn very closely from an English portrait painter who has an international reputation.

Régis Michaud has recently published a volume, rather elementary to be sure, but nevertheless of considerable interest to the French reader entitled "La Pensée Américaine: Autour d'Emerson" (Paris: Bossard). It is a collection of essays in interpretation of the thought of Emerson and other American writers of the nineteenth century, notably Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, William and Henry James, and Henry Adams, with some comment upon current literary practice and tendencies.

Two books which are arousing a good deal of comment are The War Diaries of Lord Bertie, and General J. H. Morgan's Records of Conversations with the Late Lord Morley. Lord Bertie, who was British Ambassador in Paris, kept a day-to-day diary from about a week before the outbreak of War, till his retirement in 1918. What gives special value to the work, is that it is scarcely bowdlerized at all. It is, therefore, full of valuable indiscretions. As it was passed by the British Foreign Office, there are some who, at any rate, pretend to think that its publication was allowed by a distinguished member of the late Labor Government in order that the public might see how very commonplace and often mistaken were the various famous men concerned with the conduct of the greatest war in history.

The conversations which General Morgan held with Lord Morley also partly deal with the outbreak of war, and contain some curious revelations. General Morgan will be remembered as the translator of "The German Warbook." He is a very able man, and a master of English.

THE Prix Goncourt for this year has been awarded to Thierry Sandre, essayist and poet, for a novel entitled "Le Chevreuille" (Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française). The book, to judge from foreign comments, is not a masterpiece despite the honor that has been bestowed upon its author. It is a psychological novel, centered about the mental and emotional experiences of a man who driven by the desire to free himself from the absorbing influences of his wife, and unbalanced by the terrific ordeal of the battle of Verdun, manages to make his escape from the army by fastening his identity on a slain man. Eventually, after the war, he returns to Paris, overwhelmed by the knowledge of his overmastering love for his wife, only to find her married to another man.

A brilliant little *tour de force* is "Seducers in Ecuador," by the clever young writer who still signs herself V. Sackville West, though she is the wife of Harold N. Olsen, author of "Verlaine" and "Byron." Mr. N. Olson is now engaged on a study of Lord Palmerston, the fascinating "Pam" of a former generation, who, when reproached with being a Don Juan, answered: "I like to give every woman a chance!"

The Oxford University Press will shortly publish the fragment of a novel written by Jane Austen in the last year of her life. The manuscript—of which only short extracts have hitherto been printed—consists of twelve chapters of what would, it would seem, have been a three-volume novel. Jane Austen gave it no name; but it has come to be known in her family as "Sanditon," from the watering-place which is its scene.



by Thomas Mann DEATH IN VENICE

The author of the greatest German novel of the 20th century, *Buddenbrooks*, shows the most modern phase of his genius in these three novelettes, *Tristan*, *Tonio Kroger*, and *Death in Venice*. The gay carnival of Venice suddenly stricken by the plague; the sanitarium on the heights of the Alps where love is made to music of *Tristan*; the town of Munich with an autobiographical fragment of the author's childhood are all treated with the skill of a great writer.

Translated from the German by Kenneth Burke, \$2.50.

ALFRED A. KNOPF

In Canada Borzoi Books can be obtained from The Macmillan Co. of Canada, Limited., St. Martin's House, Toronto.

YOUTH RIDES WEST by Will Irwin

Youth Rides West is not only a fine story beautifully written but also a vivid picture of a new locale and era in the literature of the West,—Cottonwoods Camp in the heart of the Rockies during the mining rush of the Seventies.

John Farrar says: "Here is the best of the western period novels. A thriller in a style both readable and fine. Rich in characters and incident, human and filled with romance. No man should miss it." \$2.00.



by Knut Hamsun SEGELFOSS TOWN

Segelfoss Town ranks with the best of Hamsun's work. It takes as its central characters many of those that appeared in *Children of the Age* and continues the theme of the rise of the merchant classes after the slow decaying of the rural aristocracy. Here again is the majestic simplicity, the direct emotion, the living, lovable characters that characterize the finest novels of the author of *Growth of the Soil*.

Translated from the Norwegian by J. S. Scott, \$2.50.

730 Fifth Ave., NEW YORK

Announcement

For the lover of books, that is to say persons who are really bookish, the list of books issued by the House of Putnam on February 6 contains many items of interest. They cover a wide range of tastes and interests from ARISTOPHANES to SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-BOUCH. The list contains many hours of good reading and many books that should be permanently on the shelves of your library.



To begin with there is a new book by Quiller-Couch called ADVENTURES IN CRITICISM which is uniform with his other writings, THE ART OF READING and THE ART OF WRITING, both of which have been popular for many years. From his university chair at Cam-



bridge this critic and master of English has looked out upon the world of letters for nearly a half century. He has known scores of writers and critics; he has watched the rise and fall of literary fashions. And out of this background he has drawn the material for this wise and stimulating volume. To bookish people a new volume by Quiller-Couch is an event to mark on the calendar in red. Go now and purchase several hours of keen enjoyment. (\$2.50)



George Borrow was one of the most spectacular of authors. His LAVENGRO and ROMANY RYE are, of course, classics, but they are no more fascinating or romantic than the story of his own life. Beginning as a peddler, he became writer and representative of the Bible Society in Spain. There, through a reckless spirit of adventure, he antagonized the Catholic powers of the moment and brought about a crisis which for a time threatened serious trouble between England and Spain. He was by nature a vagabond. The story of his life is set forth brilliantly by Herbert Jenkins in THE LIFE OF BORROW. (Illustrated, \$3.75)



The week also brings the Loeb Classical Library edition of ARISTOPHANES in the famous Benjamin Bickley Rogers Translations. It is the first time that the plays of Aristophanes in this translation have been available at a popular price. It includes all the plays and sells for \$2.50 a volume, regular cloth bound Loeb edition.



Three other titles have been added to the Loeb list. They are HOMER'S ILLIAD, Vol. I.; STRABO, Vol. III., and LUCRETIVS. Each \$2.50, cloth.

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Art

MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS. By William Sener Rusk Norman. Remington. \$2.50.
ONE HUNDRED DRAWINGS. By Abraham Wol-kowitz. Huebsch. \$10.

Belles Lettres

THE GRUB STREET NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENTS. By J. C. Squire. Doran. \$2.50 net.
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS. A Tribute to Wilberforce Eames. Privately published.
READINGS FROM THE LITERATURE OF ANCIENT GREECE. By Dora Pym. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.
PERSIAN LITERATURE IN MODERN TIMES. By E. G. Browne. Cambridge University Press (Macmillan).
ROMAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION. Selected and edited by George Hecce and Gustave Adolphus Harter. Harpers. \$4.
GREEK LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION. Selected and edited by George Hecce and Gustave Adolphus Harter. Harpers. \$4.
LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH POETS. By William Haslitt. Oxford.
A YEAR OF PROPHECY. By H. G. Wells. Macmillan. \$2.
WILLIAM MASON. By John W. Draper. New York University Press.

Biography

THE PRIME MINISTERS OF BRITAIN, 1721-1921. With a Supplementary Chapter to 1924. By the Hon. OLIVE BIGHAM. Dutton. 1924. \$5.

The two years and a half that have elapsed since the first publication in America of Mr. Bigham's lives of the British premiers have added three men to the list. Bonar Law, Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald furnish the subject of a guarded additional chapter in the new edition of the work. Mistrusting the worth of judgments formed too soon after the event, Mr. Bigham has made no attempt to squeeze these three figures into the general scheme of what is otherwise a book largely of comparisons. He has furnished biographical notes and brief character likenesses that closely resemble the current impressions of these three men; sketches that do not meddle too deeply with their individualities or their importance as factors in the British life-history. In closing, he points out that the last six Prime Ministers have all been lawyers, journalists, or business men who seriously practised their private vocations, and he asks whether their kind will as a type achieve the prudent moderation suitable to the great office. Is it a doubt, or merely a question? Mr. Bigham's added chapter would have made more vivid reading if he had not put such restraint on his leanings toward ministerial tradition, but the book as a whole would have lost some of its merit as a calm and deliberate appraisal.

THE PATERNITY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN. By William E. Barton. Doran. 2 vols. \$2.50 net each.

SPANISH WATERS. By Henry Reynolds. Boston: Lauriat. \$4.50 net.

THE RETURN OF THE "CUTTY SARK." By C. Fox Smith. Boston: Lauriat. \$1.25 net.

FRONTIER LAW. By William J. McConnell. World Book Co. \$1.20.

JOHN VISCOUNT MORLEY. By John H. Morgan. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.

THE LETTERS OF OLIVE SCHREINER. Edited by S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner. Little, Brown. \$5 net.

CASANOVA IN ENGLAND. Edited by Horace Bleakley. Knopf. \$5 net.

Drama

A STUDY OF THE MODERN DRAMA. By Barrett H. Clark. Appleton. \$3.50.

TOO MUCH MONEY. By Israel Zangwill. Macmillan. \$1.50.

Fiction

DESERT BREW. By B. M. BOWER. Little, Brown. 1924. \$2.

The efficient lady who writes under the name of B. M. Bower may be counted upon to provide fresh and enlivening trimmings for her Wild West stories. She always manages to furnish something that lifts the tale out of the ruck of its class. They are typically, characteristically Wild West yarns, with a sufficiency of gun fighters, notably

virile heroes, and the usual trappings, but they also manage to have a definite flavor of their own. This time the "features" include a masquerading author with a portable typewriter, and a thoroughly up-to-date outfit of bootleggers, a revenue officer-sleuth and, as a pendant to the moonshiners, a gentleman who has been taken to the ranch and mountain country by his wife to find a cure for the "drink habit." This amiable alcoholic addict also has a daughter, fully qualified for the rôle of heroine. The game becomes lively in the hunt for the source of supplies which keep the neighborhood moist. It is hardly necessary to add that there is a mine, and that the country is nicely equipped with eccentric characters. The narrative moves smoothly and rapidly, to good dramatic situations and a lively finish. There are also humorous touches, and the inevitable love story is not allowed to interfere unduly with the rest of the tale.

THE JADE GOD. By ALAN SULLIVAN. Century. 1925. \$2.

Mr. Sullivan's tale has two qualities rare in books of its kind; it has distinction of style and it succeeds in building up its mystery without employing the hackneyed mechanism of the conventional detective tale. It is indeed an excellent story, well articulated, well told, moving with certainty and swiftness to an end that is in doubt until the culmination of its train of incidents. Mr. Sullivan has evolved an atmosphere of mystery from apparently commonplace circumstances, and has done it so adroitly that from the first chapter in which his hero is introduced in the act of taking possession of the country house which holds every promise of the quietude necessary to his writing to the final moment in which he is definitely relieved of its baleful influence the reader is under tension. Yet the story has few startling incidents in its chronicle of the attempt to unravel the circumstances under which the former owner of the house had been murdered. It is in the subtle influences which play upon its later tenants that the interest and suspense of the story center. These are consistently rather suggested than described, and so introduced as to build up their effect by the mere cumulation of hints rather than by unexpected happenings. The book in its sustained suspense, its fluent narrative, and its plausible unfolding of episode rises far above the majority of mystery stories of the day.

LOUDON FROM LARAMIE. By JOSEPH B. AMES. Century. 1924. \$2.

Mr. Ames is a liberal provider. This story is an egg with a double yolk—twins. It is not only a strenuously active Wild West yarn, with the usual abundance of fighting, cattle rustling, and so on, but it is also a detective-puzzle story. As if it were not quite enough of a job for a hero to be a real he-man, miraculously quick on the draw and all that, without also demanding of him the duties of a highly qualified sleuth! Yet the combination works well: Loudon functions efficiently in each part of his double rôle. In fact it needed a superhero of his calibre to foil the large company of heavy villains of the piece: it runs to murders, highway robberies, and even an organized attack upon a Government shipment of money to an army post, to say nothing of the cattle and horse stealing. There is also, inevitably, a heroine who has to be kidnapped and rescued. But Loudon is equal to any emergency. When we first meet him he has taken on the job of finding out who is stealing his employer's cattle, but the larger crimes soon put such trifles into the background. In fact none of the situations which normally belong to either type of story is omitted. And it is all very well done, logically worked out through a complex plot and moving to a finish that would screen nobly. It provides a soundly guaranteed money's worth of thrills.

THE LAW OF THE THRESHOLD. By FLORA ANNIE STEEL. Macmillan. 1924. \$2.25.

One has not, of course, the right to object to an author's choice of subject-matter; and if what seems to be poor material develops into a powerful and engaging book, his success is only the greater. Mrs. Steel, in "The Law of the Threshold," has chosen to write concerning the inner life of India, the religious fanaticism of its unwesternized lower

(Continued on next page)

Dutton's

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