

A Letter from London

By MARIE BELLOC LOWNDES

PERHAPS the two most interesting books published in England during the coming year will concern two men whose lives were as far apart the one from the other as two lives can well be. I refer to the forthcoming collection of letters written by Joseph Conrad and to Sir Sydney Lee's official life of King Edward the Seventh.

To the mind of the present writer no biography of a famous man, however interesting and valuable, and however unexpected may be some new fact or facts that it presents, can compare with the publication of a series of letters written by that same man with no thought of publication. A man's letters, written with his own hand, tell the truth always, or, rather, even when the letters are lying letters, they invariably reveal the writer's character and general outlook on life. We have yet to learn whether Conrad was a good letter writer. I lately read several letters written by him to a lady, no longer young, for whom he had a high regard. They were written in French, and were, to all intents and purposes, those of a Frenchman writing to a Frenchwoman. They are delightful in turn and expression, and instinct with a kind of delicate and shrewd humor, but they reveal curiously little of the writer's personality. I hear from one of his friends, who is in a position to speak with authority, that though he sometimes wrote most interesting letters, they were always disappointingly unegotistical. Now and again, in answer to a direct question on the part of some correspondent whom he liked, he would write of, say, the genesis of one of his books. One such letter, which may or may not be published in the forthcoming collection, dealt in great detail with one of the characters in "The Nigger of the Narcissus," but of himself he always wrote singularly little.

I hear that Sir Sydney Lee intends to make copious use of King Edward's correspondence. Both as Prince of Wales and, later on, as a sovereign burdened with a great daily mass of work, he was a most excellent letter writer; even his shortest notes to those whom he trusted were full of wit and point, and he was ever one of those more human beings who can infuse the spirit of fun into what they write. With the exception of certain formal notes which have appeared here and there in contemporary volumes of recollections, none of the late King of England's letters have been allowed to be published. It is a tribute to the good sense and sincerity of nature of George the Fifth that the delicate, as well as the onerous, task of writing his father's official life has been entrusted to Sir Sydney Lee. It is an open secret that there were passages in Sir Sydney Lee's life of King Edward in the "Dictionary of National Biography" which hurt and annoyed certain members of the royal family. It seemed, in the eyes of at least two of Queen Victoria's surviving children, to show a measure of blame of both the then Prince of Wales' parents with regard to the severity and sunlessness of his early education. The necessarily short biography was, however a model of what such a biography should be, and the late king—unlike so many royal personages—will certainly be proved to have been fortunate in his biographer.

A great many people—though not perhaps as many people as would have been the case even a few years ago—will look forward to reading the early, and rather mysteriously suppressed, novel of Swinburne's entitled "Lesbia Brandon." The manuscript of this book has long been in the possession of the famous bibliophile, Mr. T. J. Wise. Those of the poet's old friends who had the right to have a say in the matter have been till lately unwilling that "Lesbia Brandon" should be published. In the days when Swinburne wrote this story, and for a long time after those days, "Lesbia Brandon" would have been regarded as "daring." That, however, will not be the case now, and I understand that the book will first appear in a limited and numbered edition.

Apropos of books which owe, may we say, part of their charm to their being regarded as "improper," "Serena Blandish, or The Difficulty of Getting Married, by a Lady of Quality," is being a good deal discussed, especially in the high little world which it portrays. Serena Blandish was described in *The Times Literary Supplement* as "a brilliant tract for the times." It recalls to at least one reader certain of those slight witty *contes libertins* at which so many French 18th century writers, from Voltaire downwards, tried their hand with

more or less success. It is known to the initiated that the creator of "Serena Blandish" is the author of two notable little volumes inspired by some phase of the war, one of which was a most beautiful and distinguished piece of work—one of the very best, if not the best, imaginative war-books written in English. It is a curious fact that the story in question, "The Lady of Quality's" second war-book, was full of heart; "Serena Blandish" is strangely without any touch of heart or—to use a far more exact if now old-fashioned word—sentiment.

The book to which I, personally, look forward very eagerly will be called "The Canterbury Letters." The manuscript was found among Maurice Hewlett's papers after his death. The "letters" are supposed to have been written by the various characters in "The Canterbury Tales" and dropped on the way during their pilgrimage. It is a delightful and whimsical idea—as delightful and whimsical as was the Hewlett known to his friends. It is a strange thing indeed that at a time when the early books of certain contemporary writers whom it is not unreasonable, or even unkind, to suppose will be as "dead as mutton" within a very few years from now, are fetching in booksellers' catalogues at least double and treble their published price, copies of the first editions of Hewlett's magnificent early novels, "Richard Yea and Nay," and "The Queen's Quair," are not even listed.

It is also good news that Mr. Somerset Maugham, whose fame as a playwright has obscured his claim to be regarded as one of the few great English novelists of our time, should be bringing out a new book. "The Painted Veil" is laid in China, and is quite unlike anything else he has written, but this unlikeness of one book to another has always been a distinguishing characteristic of Mr. Maugham. I remember the deep impression made on me by "Mrs. Craddock," a book which fell practically dead, this being the more curious as "Liza of Lambeth" had made quite a little stir. "In Human Bondage" was at once appreciated by all those who like fine and distinguished work but it was not till "The Moon and Sixpence" appeared that Mr. Maugham reached the wide reading public, and it is strange that the great majority of those who are familiar with him as a playwright seem quite unconscious that he is also a novelist.

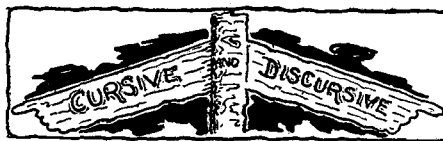
Foreign Notes

MUSIC lovers will find of interest the volume which Alma Maria Mahler has edited and recently published containing a selection of the letters of her eminent husband. "Gustave Mahler: Briefe (1879-1911)" brings together a correspondence addressed to a large number of persons, some of whom are known to the Anglo-Saxon public, but more of whom are not. They are not of large importance, but they cast much interesting light on Mahler's compositions and experiences as a musical conductor.

For several years *The Bookman's Journal* of London has published a monthly analysis of the demands in England for first editions of modern British authors, based on the desiderata of second hand booksellers compiled from English trade papers. In the list for the four weeks ending November 22, printed in the December number, the ten leaders are as follows: John Galsworthy, Anthony Trollope, Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, W. H. Hudson, Sir J. M. Barrie, E. M. Forster, Michael Arlen, and Thomas Hardy. The list contains fifty-four names and it is surprising to find Robert Louis Stevenson and Oscar Wilde at the foot. There are some indications that the demand for the less important authors has passed its peak, but the first editions of Conrad, Kipling, Hudson, and Stevenson will doubtless continue.

A memorial to Gibbon, the historian, at Lausanne, where he spent many years and where he finished his history and memoirs, is under consideration.

The famous London auction house of Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge has changed its name to Sotheby & Company. The management and policy will remain unchanged.



BY THE PHOENICIAN

THE latest kind of a novel seems to be the cubist novel as exemplified by Eugene Zamiatin's "We" translated by Gregory Zilboorg. The underlying idea of the book was touched upon by the Capeks in "The World We Live In" and "R. U. R." In "We" is set forth the millenium of standardization, where individuals are simply numbers and all their activities ordered according to a Table of Hours. Their thinking is done for them by a State Journal, their conduct supervised by a Well-Doer. The great United State of which they are all members insists upon their all voting their state within it as 100% happiness. Finally after the crushing of an abortive revolution the malcontents are rounded up to have their Centre of Fancy carefully excised. The style of "We" is odd in the extreme, but the satire is trenchant.

Boni & Liveright declares that limited editions of the "Intimate Letters of James Gibbons Huneker," "The Poems of François Villon," and George Moore's "Anthology of Pure Poetry" were all sold out before publication.

We learn that a unique second-hand bookstore in Springfield, Massachusetts, is Johnson's Second-Hand Bookshop. Joseph Conrad, Rebecca West and Robert Frost have so endorsed it. Peter Neal—see Heywood Brown—purchased his copy of "Ulysses" there. If you ever want to hunt up Johnson's you will find it at 391 Main Street.

Lewis Galantiere has translated Jean Cocteau's novel, "Thomas the Imposter." Thomas is said to be "one of the most appealing characters in French fiction." This to us seems more important news than, for instance, that Ibanez's "Alfonso XIII Unmasked" has stirred up a lot of excitement in Spain, even though Ibanez tried to get his book in pamphlet form smuggled across from France into Spain, and the Spanish Government promptly ordered all aircraft passing the border to be shot down.

Hervey Allen informs us of the Blindman Prize of the Poetry Society of South Carolina, previously awarded year by year to Grace Hazard Conkling, Leonora Speyer, and Joseph Auslander. W. Van R. Whittall, Esq. of Pelham, N. Y., offers this prize of \$250 to any citizen of the United States or to any British subject speaking English for the best poem fourteen lines or over (with special consideration to sustained poems of length) who submits a previously unpublished and uncopyrighted poem (one only) accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the name of the author, to The Blindman, care the Poetry Society of South Carolina, No. 57 Broad St., Charleston, S. C. All poems must be typed on one side of the paper only, accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

We wonder at Mr. Walter Edwin Peck, who has stated in *The New York Times Book Review* of January 11th that "The Triumph of the Whale" is Shelley's lost satire upon the Prince Regent. This poem, as everyone knows, is by Charles Lamb and Lamb gave it to Leigh Hunt. The superior book dealer, Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, of Manhattan, possesses the original manuscript which Hunt printed either in the *Indicator* or the *Examiner*.

Edgar Saltus is having a revival. Pascal Covici announces four of his unpublished works and a biography by Mrs. Marie Saltus. "Uplands of Dreams" (stories and essays), "Victor Hugo and Golgotha," "Floraline Schopenhauer," "Purple and Fine Women" (introduced by W. L. George, "Poems by Edgar and Marie Saltus," and "Edgar Saltus, The Man," are the titles.

We call especial attention to the public exhibition from Sunday, January 25th on, of the Japanese Print Collection of Arthur Davison Ficke, and also this noted American poet's "Jade Dragons," a collection of ancient carved Chinese girdle-clasps, at the Anderson Galleries (Mitchell Kennerley, President). An attractive illustrated catalogue of the latter will be mailed by the Galleries on receipt of fifty cents. The Jade Dragons are to be sold by order of Mr. Ficke on Thursday afternoon, January 29, at 2:30, and the Japanese Print Collection is to be sold Thursday and Friday evenings, January 29th and 30th, at 8:15.

THEATRE ARTS MONTHLY

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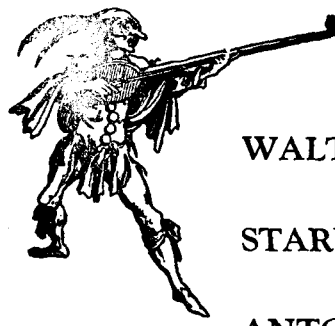
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Announcement



Have you ever wished that you could have been a famous person out of history? Think of the fun you could have had as Voltaire, or perhaps Cleopatra, or the Grand Mademoiselle, or Mirabeau, or Leonardo de Vinci, or Talleyrand. Fancy living in their times, knowing the people they knew, discussing the gossip and scandal that made their idle hours bright and amusing.

They are dead, of course, but they still live in the biographies that have been written of them. *The House of Putnam has made biography—excellent biography—one of the strong points on its list over a period of eighty years. The result is a fine assortment.*

There is THE LIFE OF VOLTAIRE, one of the most amusing and brilliant stories ever put on paper, by S. J. Tallentyre, who, it may surprise you to learn, is not a man but a woman (her first name is Sarah). This Life is a classic and generally acknowledged to be the best that has been written. The same author has written in THE LIFE OF MIRABEAU the stirring tale of a dynamic man of energy, as different from Voltaire as day is from night.

Then there is LEONARDO DA VINCI: THE FORERUNNER by D. Merejkowski, a famous book which continues to increase its sales steadily since it was published several years ago. If you have not read it, you have missed a remarkable book dealing with a character who stands as the perfect example of the genius... a man who was an engineer, a painter, a writer, a sculptor, a politician, a man of overflowing energy and charm and perhaps the greatest figure of the Renaissance.

OLD COURT LIFE IN FRANCE, by Frances Elliot, presents a glowing picture of life in the courts of the French Kings. There is a marvelous process of fascinating characters—Diane de Poitiers, Cardinal de Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin, Marie de Medici, Louise de Lavallière, de Montespan, de Maintenon, Voltaire, Diderot, Racine, Molière, de Pompadour, Marie Antoinette, the Princesse Lamballe, Mirabeau—all these and many others out of a history that reads like the most fascinating romance.

In addition to these there are the two new biographies, both best sellers, MARIE ANTOINETTE by Hilaire Belloc, and THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CLEOPATRA by Arthur Weigall, which offer novel points of view on these two famous queens.

If you are weary of fiction turn aside and buy this list of biographies. They will provide such a feast of reading as cannot be excelled.

They can be obtained at any bookstore or from Putnams, on Forty-fifth Street, just west of Fifth Avenue.

G.P.PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK LONDON

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

- A HISTORY OF SCULPTURE. By George Henry Chase and Chandler Rathfon Post. Harpers.
MASTERS OF ARCHITECTURE. By W. W. Scott-Moncrieff. Scribners. \$2.50.

Belles Lettres

- THE FREEMAN BOOK. Huebsch. \$3.
ERASMUS. IN PRAISE OF FOLLY. Edited by Horace Bridges. Pascal Covici.
A LAST SCRAP BOOK. By George Saintsbury. Macmillan. \$3.

Biography

- MARY STUART. By FLORENCE A. MACCUNN. Dutton. 1924.

This is a life of the much-written Mary of Scotland, told by a woman from a woman's point of view, and well and simply constructed. It contains no new material, new theories, or new interpretations, but is by no means a mere compilation. Readers who wish a competent biography, which does not assume pre-knowledge of the woman and the period, will find this book acceptable. The style is easy and the characterization excellent.

- "WILD BILL" (JAMES BUTLER HICKOK). By O. W. Coursey. Mitchell, S. D.: Educator Supply Co.

- SELECTIONS FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ELIZABETH SMITH. Edited by Mary Alice Wyman. Lewiston, Me: Lewiston Journal Co.

- ANNEKE JANS BOGARDUS AND HER NEW AMSTERDAM ESTATE. Compiled by Thomas Bentley Wikoff, Indianapolis, Ind.

- TWICE THIRTY. By Edward W. Bok. Scribners. \$4.50.

- SOME VICTORIAN MESS. By Harry Furniss. Dodd, Mead. \$4.

- LETTERS OF JAMES BOSWELL. Collected and edited by Chauncey Brewster Tinker. Oxford. 2 vols. \$12.

- NOON. By Kathleen Norris. Doubleday, Page. \$1.50.

- ROUND THE WORLD. By Frank Hedges Butler. Stokes.

- FOUR WAY LODGE. By Charles B. Reed. Pascal Covici.

- "THEREFORE": AN IMPRESSION OF SORABJI KHARSEDJI LANGRANA AND HIS WIFE FRANCINA. Oxford. \$2.50.

Drama

- THE FIREBRAND. By Edwin Justus Mayer. Boni & Liveright. \$2.

- THE GUARDSMAN. By Franz Molnar. Boni & Liveright. \$2.

- WEBER & FIELDS. By Felix Isman. Boni & Liveright. \$3.50.

- THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF GERHART HAUPTMANN. Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. Vol. VIII. Huebsch.

- THERE CAME TWO WOMEN. By Herbert Quick. Bobbs-Merrill.

- THE CHARLESTON STAGE IN THE XVIII CENTURY. By Eola Willis. Columbia, S. C.: The State Co. \$5.

- LUCIFER. By George Santayana. Cambridge, Mass.: Dunster House.

- OLD ENGLISH. By John Galsworthy. Scribners. \$1.

Economics

- THE ECONOMIC LAWS OF ART PRODUCTION. By Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith. Oxford University Press. \$2.

- LABOR POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION. By Charles A. Gulick. Longmans, Green.

Education

- THE DECROLY CLASS. By Amélie Hamaïde. Dutton. \$2.

- THE TEACHING OF HIGH SCHOOL SUBJECTS. By William A. Millis and Harriet H. Millis. Century. \$2.25.

- PERSONNEL PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING STAFF. By Ervin Eugene Lewis. Century. \$2.25.

- VOLTAIRE'S "MEROPE." Edited by Thomas Edward Oliver. Century. \$1.10.

- THE YALE COURSE OF HOME STUDY. By Ralph H. Gabriel and Arthur B. Darling. Yale University Press.

- THE ENGLISH SPEAKING NATIONS. By G. W. Norris and L. S. Wood. Oxford. \$1.20.

Fiction

- THE PROWLER. By HUGH WILEY. Knopf. 1924. \$2.

About eight years ago, at a guess, when Mr. Bruce Barton was the editor of *Every Week*, we recall our happy introduction to the negro stories by Octavus Roy Cohen, then appearing in that magazine since lost to print. Subsequently we found them in the wide and blossoming pages of the *Saturday Evening Post*, interdigitated almost with the stories of his contemporary and immediate rival in the ebony field, the lady luck man, Hugh Wiley. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Wiley are both exceedingly clever, but of the two we prefer the cleverness of the latter as the more naïve and the more uniformly sustained. It is something of an accomplishment to tie together the random, even isolated, adventures of a trio (one-third of which is omnivorous goat) when, after all, plot is secondary to incident, and the mechanics of any moment form but the pegs on which to hang brilliant threads of negro dialect and idiom. It is remarkable to be annually amusing with a single subject.

O. Henry's collection, "The Gentle Grafters," musters at least three salient elements: plot, humor, and the surprise ending. That is only a volume. W. W. Jacobs builds upon a similar foundation, but never writes two contiguous tales of the shrewd and evasive Bob Pretty. Mr. Cohen, combining conventional methods with the power of rich, native speech, is more in their wake. His characters are gregarious, his plots thicken. Mr. Wiley is more independent. He leads his wandering Ossians, the amazing Wildcat Vidus Marsden, the tractable Demmy, the four-footed Lily, through illimitable small episodes that here, with the appearance of "The Prowler," come to several volumes. They are company enough, those three. The conversation (of two of them) forgives triviality and impossibility alike. There is life. There is laughter. There is the exhibition of a genius at nothing more than idiomatic repartee, succeeding to such an extent that his own third person intrusions are depressions on the chart of humor.

Footloose, the Wildcat, and his faithful attachés "boon their stummicks" with an assorted harvest from the moist and arid lands of California—oranges of Hollywood, lemons of the bootlegger, figs of pure graft. "The Prowler," like its predecessors, is cyclic; a record of human emotions, a diary of appetites, a witness to attainment and despair. Money! "I sees de ol' cap'n wid six lootnants. Six-ace! Hot dam!" Luxury: "Got to leave heah mighty sudden befo' us gets bogged down neck-deep in de money mud. . . ." Poverty (alas!): "Wisht us could come up wid some corn-field or mebbe a misguided pullet whut has seen 'nuff of life." Lady Luck is around the corner; the romance of the quest is high.

*When OP Man Trouble ketches up
To where I used to stand,
He finds my footprints leadin' to
De elsewhere Promised Land.*

- THE LATE UNPLEASANTNESS. By NORVAL RICHARDSON. Small, Maynard. 1924. \$2.

Mr. Richardson tries valiantly to inject something worthy of being called a study in his treatment of hang-over Civil War prejudices and memories and their present influences. The spirit is willing, but the mind and method are weak. He achieves nothing more than a portrait of stage Southerners, pitiful and inadequate puppets. In contrast to that there is the simple and—for his readers—effective means of sustaining interest in his yarn. For the plot of this novel is built on the absorbing problem: Will they marry?

The they in question are a young diletante artist, born in America but brought up in France, and a Southern belle, poor but persevering and patrician. To achieve marriage and happiness they must overcome, first, the hero's desire to leave Cottonville, Mississippi, to which he is bound by the will of a rich but eccentric relative, and hie back to the life of freedom, æsthetics, and French menus in Paris, and, second, the heroine's promise, given when she was fifteen years of age, to marry the seventy-year old Colonel Morancey. Here enter the comic and melodramatic elements necessary to bolster up the tale. Ghosts and crazed Civil War veterans, jealous parvenues, naïve negroes

(Continued on next page)

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By NESTA H. WEBSTER

Author of "The French Revolution," etc.

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