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# The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to Mrs. BECKER, c/o The Saturday Review.

## A BALANCED RATION

**WILD MARRIAGES.** By B. H. Lehman (Harpers).

**THESE UNITED STATES.** Edited by Ernest Gruening (Boni & Liveright).

**CALLINICUS.** By J. B. S. Haldane. (Dutton).

M. H., a Northerner living in Louisiana, asks for books about the State, historical, folk-lore, and fiction.

THERE is a chapter on Louisiana in the first of the two volumes of "These United States," edited by Ernest Gruening and written by famous natives of all the States, one for each (Boni & Liveright). I do not know if these reports on the souls and bodies of the States are all as sound as those I have been able to verify from experience, but to name but one, the book would be worth owning if only for Dorothy Canfield's "Vermont." Another book of general interest useful here is "North America," by J. R. Smith (Harcourt, Brace), a library in one large and absorbingly interesting volume. This is neither a travel-book nor a geography but something higher than either with the best qualities of both. Even the illustrations are unusual. A State history of Louisiana comes from the Hauser Co., New Orleans, and the Southern Pacific issues travel pamphlets. The American Folk Lore Society has published a large collection of "Louisiana Folk Tales." "A Confederate Girl's Diary," by Mrs. Sarah Morgan Dawson (Houghton Mifflin), is straight history, and Louisiana is uncommonly rich in historical novels: the latest to appear is Grace King's "La Dame de Ste. Hermine" (Macmillan), a strong, sad story of the early days of New France. Everyone knows George Cable's "Old Creole Days," "Bonaventure," and especially "The Grandissimes" (Scribner), and one who has once read Lafcadio Hearn's "Chita" (Harper) has it yet in the mind—I read it in its original magazine form and it is still vivid in memory. Kate Chopin's "Bayou Folk" (Houghton Mifflin) is a series of stories and sketches of the descendants of the Acadian refugees, and Nevil Henshaw's "The Inheritance of Jean Trouve" (Bobbs Merrill) is laid in New Orleans and in the swamp country. "Under the Levee," by E. Earl Sparking (Scribner), is the largest set of stories to utilize the extraordinary resources of this part of the world for a writer whose forte is the exotic, the colorful, and the macabre. There is a strong flavor of this last in most of these tales, spiced with humor.

WE aim to please but when the Akron, Ohio, Public Library asked us to prove once for all our claim to second-hand Persian scholarship by naming Marjorie Barkley McClure's cat, the Reader's Guide found itself, as many a cat has been, up a tree. It appears that this lady, whom you will recognize as the author of a widely read novel called "High Fires" (Little, Brown) had been lately presented with a jet-black Persian which she desired to call by the name in that language meaning Midnight, whatever that word might prove to be. When my rash boast appeared in the Guide, the Akron Library, to whom the task had been confided, promptly unloaded it upon me, and I upon Harry Griswold Dwight, author of "Constantinople Old and New" (Scribner), for if you write a book as delightfully amusing as "Persian Miniatures" (Dobuleday, Page), you may be expected not only to have access to a Persian dictionary but to possess the needful friend-

liness to cats. And sure enough came back this letter:

I once had a black Persian myself, but he disappeared long since and so I couldn't ask him. My Persian dictionary, moreover, is safely in storage in New York. And of course I long ago forgot the three Persian words I ever knew—of which midnight was not one. Having left the State Department, too, and therefore being out of touch with Persian secretaries, as well as too lazy to go to the Congressional Library, I did what probably mystified not a little the gentleman to whom "Persian Miniatures" is dedicated. I cabled to him in London, asking him the Persian word for midnight. Nevertheless he very promptly cabled back the mystic syllables

NESFESHAB

(accent on the last syllable, with a minor one on the first).

If I were a Persian cat naturalized in America, I fear that name would strike me unfavorably. But for ordinary occasions it might be shortened to Shab, which means Night. Or if the cat is a lady she might be called Leila (pronounced Lay-lah) which also means Night.

H. G. DWIGHT.

And so, even if it takes a cable, the clients of this department rally to its reputation for good advice on literary matters. And if anyone doubts the strictly literary character of that question, let him look in the "Note Books of Samuel Butler" where I am informed that he makes the statement that the test of literary ability is to be able properly to name a kitten.

But from now on, questions on Persian shawls, cats, blinds and apparatus will be answered by mail!

P. H., New York, asks for a statement of the principles of philosophy as set forth by the Greeks.

IN the Series of World's Manuals issued by the Oxford University Press—in which are some uncommonly useful little books on large subjects—is one by M. E. J. Taylor on "Greek Philosophy" that gives, condensed, but not hurried or blurred, the underlying principles and distinctive features of the systems of the Greek philosophers. With this one should read Casson's "Ancient Greece," in the same series, and of course their "Legacy of Greece."

Not to go further upon a list that stretches very far, there are volumes on "Platonism," "Aristotelianism," and "Stoicism" in the series of small and valuable volumes on "Our Debt to Greece and Rome" (Marshall Jones), and the indispensable studies of Paul Elmer More, "Platonism," and "The Religion of Plato" (Princeton University Press).

K. S., Newport, R. I., sends the inquirer for plays that could be given in a church a clipping that appeared in the Plain Dealer among Herbert Rugg's topics in religious education: "A dramatization of Tyndale and his difficulties as a translator has been made by Elizabeth Miller Lobingier of Oberlin, O. The dramatization is designed for use as a project of a church Sunday-school class." Another correspondent sends for L. A. S.'s collection of data on "the kiss in literature," news that Harry Kemp's play "The Game Called Kiss" was given four times this month, in the basement theatre of St. Mark's Chapel, 288 East 10th street, with incidental music written by Bobby Edwards.

(Continued on next page)

**YOU ARE A WRITER.** Don't you ever need help in marketing your work? I am a literary adviser. For years I read for Macmillan, then for Doran, and then I became consulting specialist to them and to Holt, Stokes, Lippincott, and others, for most of whom I have also done expert editing, helping authors to make their work saleable. Send for my circular. I am closely in touch with the market for books, short stories, articles and verses, and I have a special department for plays and motion pictures. **The Writers' Workshop, Inc.** 135 East 58th Street New York City

*Alfred Kel*

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## Points of View

### German Thinkers

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

In your issue of January 31, Mr. Robert Graves had an illuminating article on "Vehicles of Poetic Thought" in which he spoke of the individual's inward senses—sight, sound, touch, and so on. He closed with these words: "I am hoping for more intense research in the question from both aesthetic and general psychologists." I read the article with concentrated interest, but largely because this is all old material to any student of German Romanticism. If Mr. Graves will take up Novalis, Tieck, the Schlegels, Fichte, Schelling, and these only, he will find, either to his astonishment or delight depending upon his temperament, that the entire subject to which he devoted approximately 4,000 words was treated at great length and from every thinkable angle in Germany a hundred and twenty-five years ago.

Now comes John Middleton Murry with his "Saint, Poet, and Psychologist." Goethe disposed of the whole of Mr. Murry's discussion when he wrote these words:

*Wer Wissenschaft und Kunst besitzt,  
Hat auch Religion;  
Wer jene beiden nicht besitzt,  
Der habe Religion!*

(Whoever possesses learning and art, has also religion;  
Let him who does not possess these two have religion!)

I do not believe that, even in the age of Pericles, has there ever been a greater group of stimulating thinkers than Germany could (though she did not) boast of during the days of the German Romanticists as these revolved about, and to a large degree proceeded from, Goethe.

ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD.  
West Virginia University.

### French Manuals

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

Mr. Marcel Clavel, in his interesting criticism (your issue of March 7) of my article "Books on French Literature," has, I think, missed the point. I would remind Mr. Clavel that I was discussing the manuals ordinarily available and widely used here in our "survey course" for college sophomores and others whose purpose is similar; I was not presuming to indulge in general criticism of French scholarship.

One who has read a few hundred examination papers and talked with some dozens of American sophomores must think that the difficulties I mentioned do exist, in one combination or another, for beginners, no matter which of these books (written by Frenchmen) they may study; and that there is a considerable difference between the equipment of the American and that of the French boy at this stage. It goes without saying that what may be perfectly clear to any person having a certain background may be most obscure to one not having it. I am taken to task for using the adjective "metaphysical" in this connection to suggest an impression common among my students; if "metaphysical" connotes "lack of clearness," I stand corrected. Far from being an indictment of the fascinating French method, it was, I am sure, an admission of our own shortcomings. But there was nothing new or strange in that paragraph. The difficulty I have noted in undergraduate classes is quite generally mentioned in prefaces to American outlines: not lack of clearness, but—Oh well, what's the use? The American student who needs it most just hasn't learned to handle it at that stage in his development.

As to the rest, naturally those few who go deeper into more elaborate histories soon reach a better understanding, gain in "intellectual *rapprochement*" as they come to appreciate, for instance, why seventeenth century French critics, and at times even Voltaire, had "not great regard" for our canonized Shakespeare and Milton (had they?); advanced students will soon learn that English literature meant more to the French, at certain periods, than the perfunctory lists of translations (Shakespeare, Richardson, Scott) in the handbooks would suggest; but that is scholarship, and I was considering rather the tools of elementary public instruction. To make sure of my point, I searched carefully through three of the most widely known handbooks (by French authors) available in America; aside from the inevitably somewhat extensive discussions of English influence on Voltaire and far less adequate mention (half-

a-dozen lines or so) of the debt of the romanticists, I found their "comparative literature" recognizing only Greek and Latin, with never a thought of fundamental, suggestive analysis of English contributions. I will "revise my statement" about intellectual *rapprochement* so far as to add a quotation from one of these handbooks, used in French schools and available in an American edition. Voltaire's "Zaire" and Shakespeare's "Othello" are being compared:

Voltaire a eu le souci de la dignité tragique non seulement en faisant périr Zaire frappée d'un coup de poignard et non pas étouffée sous un oreiller, mais en transposant en un style oratoire et noble l'emportement un peu vulgaire du modèle.

This is not an isolated example. It may perhaps surprise some to find, a few pages further on, a really sympathetic treatment of German influences on Mme. de Staël. To the scholar such widely divergent views become a most interesting subject for discussion (not mutual accusation!) that is half the fun of life; but the American or English beginner cannot, I think, derive the fullest measure of understanding from a guide whose approach seems to him so strange.

There are so few in the advanced group, the group that will reach the scholarly attitude, and so many in the other crowd for whom we might do so much more than we seem to be doing. I grant it may be hopeless to attempt this; but then . . .

So, after all, the real point is not that I may have failed to make my opening paragraphs clear, nor even that I may be mistaken, in matters of detail; the real point is whether my main thesis is sound: that there is room for an elementary manual written from an English or American point of view, because it could proceed from the familiar to the unfamiliar (good metaphysics); one that sets out to present French literature as an essential part of the history of European civilization, not as a detached bit of mental discipline.

HENRY DEXTER LEARNED.  
Chapel Hill,  
North Carolina.

### With Apologies

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

The name of Herbert Alden Youtz, author of "The Supremacy of the Spiritual," reviewed in your issue of February 28, was misspelled Yontz in both the heading and the article. Can you not print some correction?

Ordinarily one passes over a misspelling because usually it causes no misapprehension; this one, however, makes a name which one recognizes only if he happens to know Dr. Youtz's given and middle names.

L. L. HANAWALT.  
Oberlin College.

### The Reader's Guide

(Continued from preceding page)

*A club in Oklahoma, and one in Kansas, ask for ideas for a program of a literary nature.*

THE "Map of Good Stories," of which I spoke with strong feeling some weeks since in this department, has come out in wall-map size, and from now on I shall recommend it to small reading-clubs in search of a pleasant and unusual basis for fiction-programs. Arranged with the greatest care by Paul M. Paine, the Librarian of Syracuse Public Library, it shows with amusing pictures and letter-press the location of a large number of American novels. A program committee with the least possible effort could arrange a tour around that map, keeping the large copy on the wall at each meeting and distributing the miniature copies among the membership. The big one costs a dollar and the tiny ones sell one hundred for two dollars: the Gold Star list of American Fiction, 500 titles classified by subject, with notes, costs a quarter—these prices to save my replying to many letters.

R. E. H., Muskogee, Oklahoma, asks for books by American authors since John Burroughs whose works are inspired by nature. "We have the book 'Nature in American Literature,' by Norman Foerster, which covers very well the works of Bryant, Lowell, Whittier, Whitman, Lanier, Emerson, Thoreau, Muir, and Burroughs," she says, and asks for later writers, especially such as would appeal to lovers of human nature as well.

"ISLES OF EDEN," by Laura Lee Davidson (Minton, Balch), is a set of essays or sketches of life, wild and otherwise, in the Lake Country of Canada, by a lady of keen observation and even keener sympathies. Village comedies and tragedies weave into the landscape and the affairs of sky and water, and the result is as lovely a book as I have read for a good while. I recommended it to a club in search of this sort of nature-literature recently, and they thanked me soundly. William Beebe's "Edge of the Jungle" (Holt) of course you know, and "Jungle Peace," and his great book with the great land lizard in all its colors on the cover, "Galapagos" (Putnam).

The nature lovers whose field for observation must lie near home will like "Robin Hood's Barn," by Margaret Emerson Bailey (Doran), a prettily made and illustrated book of studies of the art of living in the country. This has a gentle human interest too, but the thrills are from coming upon some creature, some flower that you know like a brother but that you have not thought about since last you saw it in its own woods. Samuel Scoville, Jr., I suppose writes for young people, but his "More Wild Folk" (Century) is quite serious enough for grownups. Helen Swift's "Where Green Lanes End" (Huebsch) takes place partly in the country round about Cincinnati, beginning in the Spring, and partly in and about New York City; these are unusual studies, quivering with happiness over sights and scenes that, told in this spirit, make the reader happy. "The Lone Winter," by Anne Bosworth Green (Century), is about a pony-farm, and "Sheep of the Shepherd," by Lillian A. North (Dutton), about a sheep-farm; I have spoken of them both before, but put them in again because I want to remind people who think that these are peaceful domestic animals and, therefore, books about them are dull, that these are both dramatic and exciting narratives.

S. S., New York, asks for books on logic for the use of a home student, an introductory work in the nature of a primer and a standard textbook to follow.

ON the advice of Professor Morris R. Cohen of City College, to whom I referred the question, the introductory book is "An Introduction to Reflective Thinking," by Columbia Associates in Philosophy, published by Houghton Mifflin. This to be followed by W. Stanley Jevons's "The Principles of Science" imported by Macmillan.

IN making that list of books on "The Beggar's Opera," on February 2, it appears that I left out the most complete and authoritative work on the subject, much more comprehensive than Kitson's. This is "Gay's Beggar's Opera: Its Content, History and Influence," by W. E. Schultz, and it was published late in 1923 by Yale University Press. The London press praised it in the highest terms as both scholarly and attractive, calling attention to its compendious nature, for it presents the "Beggar's Opera" from the historical, literary, dramatic, musical, and even moral point of view. Also it was chosen for one of the Fifty Most Beautifully Printed Books in America for 1923.

### The New Books International

(Continued from page 636)

The faults spring mainly from necessary circumscription of the subject. Thus Emperor William appears in a more favorable light than a more general history will ever shed upon him, while Emperor Charles is made more indecisive than he really was. But, perhaps, these objections, are too pedantic. With Kühnemann, Czernin, Tisza, Ludendorff, Pflanzer-Baltin and many others the author is on surer ground, and very plainly does he depict the moderation of the first, the nervous anxiety of the second, the intolerance of the third, the inconceivable vanity of the fourth, and the adventurousness of the last—the General who worked a miracle in retiring from Albania with an undefeated army.

Never more clearly have the last days of the two Monarchies been described. Never more simply has it been shown that Germany suffered a crushing military defeat. Never has it been plainer revealed that Austria and Hungary must before all the world acknowledge that the disintegration of the Dual Monarchy was the corollary of their indecisions and haughty bunglings. Dr. Nowak has combined to perfection simplicity of style with profundity of knowledge; his book is, therefore, illuminating and absorbing—as all good history should be—never dull or academic.

THE ENEMIES OF LIBERTY. By E. S. P. HAYNES Hyman-McGee. 1924.

The point of view emphasized in this volume is that of a benevolent individualist who deplores encroachments upon personal liberty latterly manifesting themselves in England. He envisages liberty as a balance between the complacency of *laissez-faire* and the interference of "compulsory social welfare." He contemplates with equanimity such abridgment of freedom as compulsory education and compulsory vaccination; he is ready to repel strenuously the attacks of "the modern puritan," "the prohibitionist," "the super-capitalist" and the "collectivist."

Mr. Haynes writes with that easy mastery characteristic of English publicists. He is not awed into inarticulateness by the profundity of his scholarship. Nor does he permit himself to grow strident with righteous indignation. He is rather given to the subtle emphasis of understatement except where he substitutes hearsay for knowledge. His credulity may be ascribed to the facile credence a journalistic attitude to social facts engenders, and to the injudicious exercise of the justly famed "vigilance" which inclines defenders of Liberty to shoot its enemies first and investigate afterwards. Whence the scholarly tone of the essay on "Contemporary History" and the amazing juvenilities parading in the chapter on "The Communist." He firmly believes that Lenin and Trotsky are German spies and that Communism preaches the nationalization of women.

### Religion

TALES OF KING SOLOMON. By ST. JOHN D. SEYMOUR. Oxford University Press. 1924. \$2.50.

The author expressly states that these tales of King Solomon, attractively bound in lemon-yellow, are intended for the general reader. Though Mr. Seymour says that he makes "no pretence at having collected all the legends in existence," his book is remarkably large and varied. Drawn from sources as far apart as Ireland and the Malay Peninsula, some of these tales are modern, and some ancient; some are anecdotes, others folktales, still others, narratives full of Oriental color and embellishment.

It might be supposed that an entire book devoted to so old a character as Solomon would prove monotonous and boring; but most of these stories are so full of the marvelous and the exotic, and so enlightening as to the peoples who created them, that they acquire a unique interest. It is true that the book cannot pleasurably be read through in one sitting; but to dip into it at random, learning of Solomon's birth and death, his wisdom, magnificence, and power, his building of the temple and reception of the Queen of Sheba, is rather refreshing. Mr. Seymour makes no attempt to fuse the tales into a harmonious whole; he presents them in sequence, with a minimum of editorial transition, and tells them in a vivid, if rather too Biblical, style. A few of the legends, by their naïveté and picturesqueness, stick in the mind: how, for example, Solomon built Golgotha, or—and this can be compared with "The Good Birds" of Elinor Wylie—how the birds wove a screen for Solomon against the sky. But one's most enduring memory of the book is its illustrations, some drawings in color by an unnamed artist, which are either decidedly ancient or decidedly futuristic.

PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM. By L. C. SIMPSON. Oxford University Press. 1924. \$2.20.

The composite origin of the Books of Moses is a theory that interests many others beside Biblical experts. It has been widely challenged in recent times. Much of the objection to it is due to misunderstanding and many of the arguments against it are based on such misunderstanding. This book was prepared and issued ten years ago by a young Oxford instructor to meet these attacks by exposing their weaknesses and particularly by expounding the critical view so widely accepted by scholars. This he did most admirably and lucidly, adding a persuasive argument to show how such a reconstruction of Israel's religious development as must follow from the analysis and dating of the pentateuch's sources is consonant with a quite edifying view of divine revelation and preparation for Christ. As an argument this aspect of the book will not appeal to less orthodox readers than the author had in mind, but in other respects the book is very satisfactory as a brief description of pentateuchal criticism. It deserved to be reprinted and to be brought again to the attention of interested readers. Nothing issued or discovered in the last decade makes it antiquated in any important feature or untimely.