

Three Plays

THE MAN WITH A LOAD OF MISCHIEF.
By ASHLEY DUKES. New York: George H.
Doran Company. 1925.
HAY FEVER. By NOEL COWARD. New York:
Harper & Brothers. 1925. \$1.50.
ROBERT BURNS. By JOHN DRINKWATER.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1925.
\$1.50.

Reviewed by MARY CASS CANFIELD

"THE Man with a Load of Mischief," by Ashley Dukes, is that difficult achievement—a successful period play. Mr. Dukes is no amateur; his play satisfactorily breathes the atmosphere of Georgian England with its coaches, gibbet-haunted highroads, candle-lit inns, pump-room belles and rakes, and the gaming tables of Bath. There is even a gouty Hanoverian prince looming in the background, but no famous names weigh down the list of characters who are presented anonymously as "A Nobleman," "A Lady," etc.

Mr. Dukes proves himself artistically aware of the era he has in hand; he also shows a neat talent as a playwright. His play has form, it has a style as definite and polished as the style evolved by artists and artisans of the Eighteenth Century. His lines have brevity and an appropriate elegance; under the stress of emotion, they develop an authentic poetic lilt. What they lack, except in a few scattered instances, is the sophisticated wit which is a more or less indicated asset of the period he is dealing with. There is nothing exuberant, kinetic, unexpected in Mr. Dukes's talent; for that very reason, perhaps, he is able to be correct, to draw his picture with unfailing taste, to sustain a graceful note. More, he is romantic without being sentimental, and back of his plot there is keen and civilized philosophy.

Mr. Noel Coward, author of "The Vortex," "Fallen Angels," and "Easy Virtue," has published the play "Hay Fever," which gave Marie Tempest a bright opportunity last summer in London, and has lately been produced in New York. It is, like all his work, brilliant, spontaneous, and entertaining. Unlike "The Vortex," it is comedy untouched by serious intent. At moments, indeed, it is farce. It presents an actress, Judith Bliss, a popular favorite living in temporary retirement at Cookham with her family, which consists of a novelist husband, an artist son, and a very modern daughter. They are served by Judith's ex-dresser, Clara, who calls them all "dear," abuses them roundly, and waits on them hand and foot. Their life is hopelessly haphazard, good-natured, sporadically and fiercely histrionic.

"Hay Fever" is a trifle, but, within its own fragile limits, excellently and easily written. Mr. Coward's method should be studied by all would-be writers of comedy; it consists in weaving amusing characteristic touches into three acts, light as air, and yet never empty or unsatisfying. Mr. Coward's bravery in making, for instance, a whole scene out of the playing of a parlor game, is truly stupendous; he has a genius for the incidental and the unexpected and the courage to introduce them whenever the fancy seizes him. His dialogue in "Hay Fever" is as terse, irresponsible, and diverting as in "The Vortex." Mr. Coward knows his people intimately and makes them talk so naturally that he achieves the effect of life itself. We are grateful to him for his skill and humor; what is nicer, we like him as we like anyone whose spirit never flags.

To turn from this fresh aliveness to the chill literary mist of Mr. John Drinkwater's "Robert Burns" is something of a shock to critical nerves. It may be unfair to compare two dramas of such different type, but after all, Mr. Coward has done a small thing about as well as possible while Mr. Drinkwater has dipped his pen in dust and botched a big one. Mr. Drinkwater has had a "go" at Abraham Lincoln, Mary Stuart, Robert E. Lee, and Oliver Cromwell presented dramatically. A vein which was interestingly rich enough in "Abraham Lincoln" has now, through these various enterprises of great pitch and moment, worn dangerously thin. His latest effort "featuring" Robert Burns is an accurate epitaph. It reads like painstaking notes at the foot of some literal biography. That it should ever be presented on the stage seems unlikely. The play is learnedly appropriate, with no striking improbabilities and no inspiration. The dialogue is earnestly credible and undistinguished. The net effect of the piece is that Mr. Drinkwater has compounded a Burns anthology in which the poet lives, punctuated with instructive comment on his life in which he is dead as a door-nail.

The BOWLING GREEN

The Outside Edge

THERE is a little pond in a Long Island glade; a pond that will never be again quite what it was when Mr. Gissing used to go sailing on it and thought it was the ocean, for now houses are building near it. But it is a pond that has done a good deal of thinking, and there seem to be in it not merely tadpoles but other slipperies just as interesting as tadpoles, shoals of small analogies and parables. There is a big willow tree that sprawls prostrate over one end of the pool and has all the appearance of being dead and naked; yet always in the juicy season it has many green things to say for itself.

Just now the pond is a smooth shield of ice, and while children scuttle about on bendy ankles and accumulate small shocks at the snub end of their spines (this makes them grow, you tell them) you may choose a clear alcove and practice the new skates. One who has, ever since boyhood, used only hockey skates, and now abandons them for a pair of the more fanciful sort (with curly Dutch ends) finds he has to learn all over again. Hockey skates are worthless except for straightaway speeding and sliding; and how pleasant it is to find that on these new curved runners one can, no matter how clumsily, swing to and fro in arcs and spirals. But as I say, it requires learning anew; it requires a fresh notion and theory of the business of skating; a quite different balance and purpose. But learning all over again is the life-job of the artist, and he who never attempts it is damned.

It is an extraordinary excitement, even for the duffer who has never done more than coast about on hockey skates, to learn that on the new runners he can lean over on the outside edge and find himself miraculously carried round on one foot in a happy spiral. The cunning steel, once you have learned to confide upon it, does not slither but cuts clean and true; the children are too occupied in their own equilibrations to make merry over your tentative antics, your experiments with the spare leg. It requires recklessness to catch just the proper lean and poise: the gesture is obviously impossible, and yet, now and then, it succeeds. You get discouraged, of course; you go home presently on flat weary feet, and think it over. And in the three books that you pick up, that evening, you are reassured to find that your private and silly little analogy about the Outside Edge is abundantly confirmed. In literature and in art and in everything else, I suppose, it isn't until you get off the flat-runners hockey skates and lean over on insupportable nothing that you begin to feel the authentic ecstasy and pang. The people, for instance, who squabble about whether the Ten Commandments should be taught in schools, have never taken off their hockey skates. Was there ever a more delicious episode than that of the lady who objected to the inculcation of Thou Shalt Not Kill among the urchins of New York City? It is pacifist propaganda, she said. She will never say truer word. And the reason is obvious why bishops and statesmen and trustees and editors and managing people of all sorts wear glittering hockey skates. They have to speed with extreme rapidity over very thin ice. They earn their living by keeping people contented and as far as possible preventing awkward questions. But the artist, who lives (at any rate part of the time) by agitating people with unbearable doubts and intolerable intimations of glory, cannot be satisfied with those long straightforward strokes. He must choose some clear corner and practise his perilous grapevine pattern. It is for him as it was for Marlow in "Lord Jim"—

It seemed to me I was being made to comprehend the Inconceivable—and I know of nothing to compare with the discomfort of such a sensation. I was made to look at the convention that lurks in all truth and on the essential sincerity of falsehood. He appealed to all sides at once,—to the side turned perpetually to the light of day, and to that side of us which, like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge . . . as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself.

There, you see, is Conrad leaning over pretty

far on the outside edge. There are no hockey skates on his feet when he's telling a story. I know people who have read, several times, the first hundred or so pages of "Lord Jim" and have never got any farther because they found, having minds active for analogy, as much to think about as they could carry. The book, you see, like almost every other exciting book, runs into theology; and Lord Jim himself is an interesting symbol of almost everyone, who (with the most honorable motives, obviously) hastens to embark in his lifeboat of some creed or set of Commandments and leave the shipload of pilgrims to its own fate. Even the French gunboat that eventually rescued the *Patna*, you remember, had two quartermasters ready with axes to cut the towing-hawser in case she began to go down. . . . It is the readiness of theologians to be first into the lifeboats, the intellectual lifeboats of course, that causes so many nowadays to cry "What can I do *not* to be saved?" Rightly does Marlow say, in that thoroughly dreadful book, "It was solemn, and a little ridiculous too, as they always are, those struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be, this precious notion of a convention, only one of the rules of the game, nothing more, but all the same so terribly effective by its assumption of unlimited power over natural instincts, by the awful penalty of its failure."

When the artist leans surely enough on the outside edge, the steel cuts its ringing and perfect curve. It may not be easy for us to say precisely what he "means;" for instance it is exhilarating to find the dramatic critics somewhat incoherent in their comments on Franz Werfel's amazing "Goat Song" which the always audacious Theatre Guild has produced. I have not seen the play but I've read it (it has just been published in a paper-bound copy) and find it thrilling. What does it "mean"? But what does "Hamlet" mean? I don't know that anyone ever attempted a *précis*, and it never occurred to me before even to wonder. For when an artist is skating like that, leaning far over on the intangible, the reader's secret comprehensions and anxious intuitions rise up to meet and support him, just as the shifting slopes and poises of balance keep the steel runner curving on its graving arc. When the young student in "Goat Song," suggested to be a son of Pan, says "Perhaps I've only had one joy in all my life, the time I saw a forest burn," it may sound senseless, but the poet knows instantly what he intends. So, throughout that strange orgiastic play, Werfel speaks to something which is deeper than any of man's catchwords. When critics tell you that they don't know what a thing means, sometimes it is because they know perfectly well but don't believe it mannerly to tell. And that, I repeat, is what poets are for: to frighten us, literally, out of our everyday wits; to make us look at the dog on the hearthrug and wonder if he is wiser than we.

Nor is the poet, when he skates on the outside edge, always terrifying or cruel. It may be such winsome and adorable stuff as Elizabeth Mackintosh has given us in a book I have seen too little praised—"Puck in Pasture," a collection of goblin poems written and illustrated by one who has the true pixie spirit. It is an ideal book to brood upon on a snowy evening when the fire burns low, when the naked trees show their dark crisscross against the dull moonhazed sky, when the mouse fleets back to the pot-cupboard and the dog sighs on the rug. At such moments solitude seems no longer shameful; your own uneasiness as you prowl restlessly about proves that the elfin world is near. If you sleep it will be to dream fearfully, perhaps; and to startle happily back into the customary world and learn how comfortable (after all!) it is. You have been skating on the Outside Edge. CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Several manuscripts, including one submitted by Sherwood Anderson, were burned recently in a small fire in the basement of Boni & Liveright's publishing house. They were on a table in the president's office which was overturned, throwing them into an open grate.

The Anderson manuscript was in handwriting and had been submitted for publication this spring under the title of "Sherwood Anderson's Notebook." A novel by Upton Sinclair entitled "Oil," and the manuscript of a new play by Edwin Justus Mayer, just back from Europe, were also partially destroyed. In neither case, however, is the damage so serious as copies of both are in existence.

Books of Special Interest

About "Antiques"

ANTIQUES. By SUSAN M. LOCKWOOD. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1925. \$3.50.

TIME, TASTE, AND FURNITURE. By JOHN GLOAG. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1925. \$5.

THE PRACTICAL BOOK OF CHINAWARE. By HAROLD DONALDSON EBERLEIN and ROGER WEARNE RAMSDALL. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1925. \$10.

Reviewed by JOHN SPARGO

HUNTING for and collecting antiques is perhaps the most universally popular of all hobbies. To that statement I shall hold steadfast though it be disputed—as of course it will—by the devotees of sundry other hobbies. The term "antiques" is rather arbitrarily restricted in usage. Roughly, it may be said to apply to old domestic furniture and furnishings, pottery, chinaware, and glass, utensils of brass, copper, pewter, iron, or tin, and the varied category of things classified as *bric-a-brac*. Books, paintings, sculptures, engravings, coins, medals, stamps, armor, jewels, autographs, and manuscripts are not included in the term "antiques," no matter how old they may be. They are separately classified with such uniformity that nobody refers to them as antiques, though there is no less antiquarian interest in old engravings than in old furniture. The differentiation is an arbitrary one, but it is not the less useful for that.

Mrs. Lockwood's book is chiefly notable for its limitations and shortcomings. The excellent illustrations by Ernest Stock, admirably supplemented by the drawings by Ilonka Karasz which decorate the end papers, are greatly superior to the text. As an informative treatise and critical guide the book is of negligible value. The author would doubtless cheerfully admit that her work is of such elementary character, and such superficial sketchiness, as to offer nothing of value to the collector of even moderate experience and knowledge. Her obvious aim is to afford guidance to beginners. Even this modest aim is not competently fulfilled, one regrets to say.

In one hundred and fifty pages of text, with generous margins and numerous illustrations, Mrs. Lockwood has covered the whole range of antiques, including chapters on Fakes and Reproductions and Restorations. It is hardly necessary in the face of this fact to say that the book is more remarkable for saying very little about a great many things than much about anything. Inevitably, this tabloid treatment of a rather complicated subject leads to much dangerous dogmatism and to the making of assertions which cannot be sustained. In discussing the various kinds of wood used in making early furniture she makes the extraordinary statement that neither plain nor curly maple is ever found in furniture made abroad, "so that any bit of maple in a piece

is indisputable evidence that it was made over here." The beginner who believes that will have to unlearn it before going very far! With mere mention of the fact that fine pieces of maple furniture are found in Russia and the Scandinavian countries, I call specific attention to the fact that maple furniture is by no means unknown in England. In Volume One of the new "Dictionary of English Furniture," by Macquoid and Edwards, is illustrated a notable bureau with maple veneering. It is indubitably English, a fine specimen of English cabinet making. In the recent Reilly sale at the Anderson Galleries there was a splendid English *torchiere* of carved maple. In old Provençal furniture, also, it is common to find inlaid maple, pretty much as in the best of our American furniture. There was an admirable example, by the way, in the Granier sale at the Anderson Galleries in December, a fine upright desk.

Much more satisfactory in every way is John Gloag's scholarly volume. It may as well be said at once that this is a notable addition to the permanently valuable literature of the subject. To avoid misunderstanding let me at once add that although I have chosen to include it in this discussion of antiques, the book is not intended as a guide to collectors of antique furniture. Mr. Gloag's purpose is rather to guide his readers in the always difficult matter of furnishing with good taste. Part I—rather more than one-half of the entire book—is given up to a history of furniture design and manufacture from 1500 to 1830, or thereabouts, with a culminating discussion of the manufacture of spurious "antiques"—which, by the way, is one of the most flourishing businesses we have. Bringing to his subject ample and sound scholarship, while he modestly insists that for authentic and detailed guidance collectors must go to the works of Gescinsky, Macquoid, and others, Mr. Gloag takes us step by step through the Queen Anne and early Georgian periods of anonymous design and craftsmanship, on through the work of the great masters—Chippendale, Shearer, Adam, Hepplewhite, Sheraton, and Phyfe.

Part II of the book is devoted to the Victorian debasement of furniture designing, and the notable recovery in the twentieth century, of which the work of William Morris was the precursor. Directly inspired by Morris, such men as Ernest Gimson, J. Henry Sellers, and Sidney Barnsley, have created designs, and made furniture, as fine as anything ever done by Chippendale or Hepplewhite or Sheraton. Part III of the work is an expert guide to the homemaker in the selection and arrangement of furniture. To sum the whole matter up, the person whose study of furniture making and designing must be confined to a single volume will be well advised to select this admirable volume for that purpose. Certainly, there is no better.

The number of elaborately illustrated and rather expensive books on ceramics recently published in England, in succession to a large number issued during the past thirty years or so, would seem to indicate that collectors of earthenware and china are much more numerous on the other side of the Atlantic than on this. Be that how it may, it is certain that interest in the subject is rapidly growing in this country. Not only is the number of collectors growing, but anybody who follows the auctions will know that men of affairs are turning to this most fascinating hobby just as English men of affairs have long done. Mr. Gladstone could talk about Wedgwood china in the most critical hours of his parliamentary life. The great Doctor Johnson was enraptured by a dainty bit of china: a simple mug from the Bow pottery would delight his soul beyond his copious powers of expression, and he even experimented with "potting" himself, so complete was his devotion to his hobby.

The authors of "The Practical Book of Chinaware" claim for their book that it is "the only work in one volume that covers the chinaware of all countries." That is a claim which they would find it difficult to sustain, I fancy. The monumental work of Chaffers covers, in a single volume, quite as large a part of the chinaware of the world as their work does. Possibly the work of Miss Jennie L. Young, published in this country nearly fifty years ago, by the Harpers, and now out of print, was regarded as non-existent—a sound enough view of out-of-print books. Be that as it may, it is worth while noting that so long ago Miss Young did precisely what they have now done. Personally, I see no good reason for their boast. Another English writer, Mr. Hobson, covered the ground with as much adequacy some twenty years ago.

Having set up the claim, the authors can hardly complain if attention is called to the fact that it represents, at best, no more than others have done before. That is of no great consequence, however, for the distinction of their work, and its claim to serious attention, do not rest upon the feature which they single out. Messrs. Eberlein and Ramsdell have produced a great work, betokening on every page its ripened and comprehensive scholarship. Covering pretty much the same ground as the well-known work of Burton, published in two sumptuous volumes some four years ago, they have produced a work which does not suffer by comparison with that of Burton. Essentially a book for reference rather than general reading, the ultimate test of its worth must be its adequacy as a ready source of information, as an authentic and dependable answerer of questions. Accordingly the reviewer has tested it by turning to it for a diversified lot of information, with far more than average satisfaction in the result. Thanks to an adequate index, a vast amount of information is made readily accessible. More than this it would be foolish to expect from any book on the subject.

Spanish Letters

AN INTRODUCTION TO SPANISH LITERATURE. By GEORGE TYLER NORTHUP. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1925. \$3.

Reviewed by RUDOLPH SCHEVILL
University of California

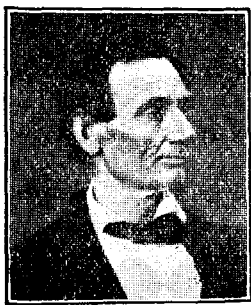
RECENT years have witnessed the appearance of a number of histories of Spanish literature, which have greatly differed in character and scope. Professor Northup has added to the extensive list a compendious narrative which deserves a place of its own. It is lucid, and generally fair to divergent opinions. The main purpose of the author was to write a condensed introduction to his subject and thus "to give the general reader and the university student an account of Spanish literature which may serve to give him his bearings on first acquaintance with the subject."

The opening chapter deals with the character of the literature and tells how it is determined by geography, history, and race. A map ought to have been added, for without it the bare rosters of the chief cities have little meaning; geography to the general reader is usually more a matter of the eye than of the ear, notably in the case of exotic names. Then follow three chapters dealing with the epic, the beginnings of the drama, early poetic monuments and the first prose works. These are excellent. By a slip of the pen (p. 30) Mr. Northup calls the *Gesta Roderici campidocti* (a prose history) a mediæval Latin epic. In the chapter on the Renaissance and Humanism one misses an adequate account of the dominating influence of Erasmus and the achievement of the *Erasmistas*. Then follow discussions of the lyric poetry of the Renaissance, of idealistic fiction, with the romance of chivalry at the head, and of realistic types of fiction which begin with the *Celestina* and the picaresque novel. The latter is especially well presented. Brief chapters on the mystics and the historians are less successful; the first subject, of profound importance in the history of the Spanish mind, is difficult to treat. Its ramifications throughout the æsthetic achievements of the Spanish people and the extensive analysis which it thus requires may be offered as an excuse for the writer's extreme brevity. The treatment of balladry, of the drama previous to Lope de Vega, of Cervantes, of Lope de Vega and his school, is straightforward and presents difficult material in a satisfactory way. As regards Cervantes, it is not at all likely that his novel, "The Jealous Estremaduran," owes anything to Boiardo.

Mr. Northup has a chapter entitled the Age of Affectation which deals with the political and literary decline of Spain during the seventeenth century. Possibly such a characterization would repel fewer readers if changed to something like the Vein of Affectation, for, obviously not all the literature of the period can be so stigmatized. The chapters on the *costumbristas* (writers of sketches) and the romantic movement are among the best, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are covered fairly comprehensively; but owing to lack of space the narrative hardly gives more than a bird's-eye view of the chief authors. On several of these the student would have welcomed a more extensive verdict.

Toward the "generation of 1898," to which belong most of the well-known writers of today, Mr. Northup shows a sympathetic attitude, although it is a little too early to give them an adequate evaluation. It can be said, however, that as a group they have accomplished little in matters of education and government because they have labored with no concerted action, and with the exception of their great master, Francisco Giner, and the admirable exile, Unamuno, have not been characterized by independence and self-sacrifice.

This is not the place to discuss debatable assertions, and one hesitates to introduce any criticism of details in connection with so useful a book. But a desire to increase its value may justify a few additional remarks. Mr. Northup's style is occasionally graceless and lacks verbal resourcefulness, as is manifest from numerous repetitions. Thus in four pages we are told four times that Juan Ruiz is democratic. On page 116 we read "*memento mori* was the motto of the Middle Ages"; on page 120, "the motto of the Middle Ages was *memento mori*" (with the crude translation "remember to die"). The word "masterpiece" occurs scores of times, often without warrant; a date could be effectively added to a few titles and occurrences. There is a bibliographical list at the close of every chapter. A new edition may be in demand presently and the numerous typographical errors and misprints can then be eliminated.



"Sandburg has achieved the crowning success of having done the one book that he, of all men now living, was specially designated to do."
—CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

Carl Sandburg's

ABRAHAM

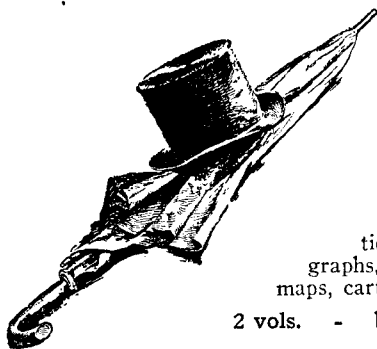
LINCOLN

The Prairie Years

THE very first chapter of Carl Sandburg's story will convince you that it is not "just another life of Lincoln." It is the man himself! Something of that genuinely spiritual quality which Lincoln possessed has crept into Sandburg's pages.

Sandburg was born and has lived in the very same part of the country where Lincoln was born and lived. He has spent the greater part of his working life visiting almost every spot Lincoln visited, studying documents, searching museums, and talking with those who actually knew him. The result is a rich, full-blooded portrait in plain homely language, fortified at every point by sound scholarship.

"A masterpiece . . . a glowingly beautiful piece of prose."—The Bookman.



JUST
READY

With 105 illustrations from photographs, and many letters, maps, cartoons and sketches.

2 vols. - boxed - \$10.00

Harcourt, Brace and Company

383 MADISON AVE.
NEW YORK