

This LETTER will interest YOU too-

Boni & Liveright,

Dear Sirs:

Did you ever have a debate with yourself? I had one—and won. I think you will be interested in it.

I am one of those people who try to get hold of the best six books each season. I learn about them in a number of ways. I read advertisements—and sprinkle a good deal of salt on them. I read reviews—and I get the opinion of my literary friends. Then I balance all three and take my chance.

This year all signs pointed to

Theodore Dreiser's AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

Critics said it was a great book, your advertising man didn't spare his list of adjectives, and my friends sort of agreed with your advertising man.

Ordinarily I would have gone right ahead and bought the book. But the darn tome is in two volumes and my general notion about a two volume book is that it is one volume too many.

So I held off. But the book didn't. It kept right on at me. So I held the debate with myself. I said to myself it can't be that you're such a lowdown nickel squeezer that your subconscious is howling about the price. All right. Acquitted! Then what difference does it make to you if you read two volumes, one way or another. Good books are rare enough to make it all the better, to have a good deal of a good one. You always finish a good book wishing there were more of it anyway.

So I won the argument. I got the book. To be perfectly frank with you, I was slow getting into it, but once I was in they couldn't pull me out of it with a derrick. And the fun of it is that it took me less time to finish it than a 264 page book in big school-reader type that I had just been struggling with.

I won't try to tell you what a big thing it is. You must have thousands of these fool fan letters. But, I thought you'd like to know about my experience. Incidentally, I have been having a good time running down an unsuspecting citizen who expressed hesitation about reading the same notorious two volume book.

Sincerely,
(Name On Request)

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A London Letter

By RODERICK RANDOM

THE charge is still levelled by Americans that British publishers and British critics refuse to take contemporary American literature seriously. Mr. Mencken, in particular, has been insistently vocal on the subject. Yet, if the accusation ever had any justification, it certainly has lost it today. On the contrary one might say that the alarm, if there is any cause for alarm, should be displayed by the native authors. Scarcely a week this year has the *Times Literary Supplement* failed to notice some new American novel. Recently Mrs. Elinor Wylie's "Venetian Glass Nephew" and Mr. Anderson's "Notebook" were noticed together, and Mrs. Wylie's book took precedence over three English novels. Still more lately "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" was reviewed, it is true, after Mr. Huxley's "Two or Three Graces," but the American volume enjoyed by far the more enthusiastic notice. Serious books from your side receive even greater consideration. And similarly the *Nation*, *New Statesman*, *Saturday Review*, and the few other weekly publications that take any interest in books at all, give to the work of American writers the full attention they deserve. Mr. Woolf, for instance, in the *Nation* the other day devoted to Carl Sandburg's "Lincoln" a notice as informed by insight and sympathy as any that vivid evocation of a whole phase of American history can have received anywhere.

Nor is it merely American books that obtain this generous share of discussion and criticism in London. In the as I write latest copy of the *New Statesman* "Affable Hawk" prints in full Mr. Sinclair Lewis's letter refusing the award of the Pulitzer Prize, a letter which already has received much space in our press. Incidentally "Affable Hawk" takes the stand, in which I for one am ready to join him vociferously, that such prizes, to be really of benefit, should be given to promising beginners. This, I may point out, is what is done frequently with the Goncourt and Femina prizes in France, and one could give a whole catalogue of French writers who have been "made" in this way. But to revert to my main theme, English criticism, then, is treating American literature handsomely.

Now, as to the attitude of the publishers here. There again the New York "knocker" has gone sadly astray. Not only have English publishers like Mr. Cape made a whole gallery of American authors known in this country—H. L. Mencken, Sherwood Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, Sinclair Lewis, Fannie Hurst, Amy Lowell, all owe their European reputation to Mr. Cape—but, and this is precisely what I am leading up to, London publishing is actually becoming Americanized. Of course, some American houses like to have a scout here, and in that way Mr. F. V. Morley cares for the interests of the Century Company. But I do not refer to that. What I should like some American to do is to count up—on his fingers, if necessary—the number of American firms that have branches in London and compare that figure with the number of English houses having branches in New York. Appleton, Brentano, Harper, Lippincott, Putnam, Scribner, all maintain offices here whence books are published. Heinemann, also, as everybody knows, while still largely autonomous, is controlled by Doubleday, Page and Co. If it is felt that American books in England are not getting what you would call a square deal, why surely the remedy is in the American publishers' hands. The English market is open to them, and they have the machinery with which to compete in it. And, furthermore, this peaceful penetration of English publishing is on the increase. Mr. Alfred A. Knopf has just opened an office amid the red-painted boarding-houses of Bedford-place, in the very shadow and odor of the British Museum. He himself is now awaited for the official house-warming. And it is not entirely anxiety concerning the fate of American literature here that has led him to take this step. Having always been eager to secure the best English writers for his list in New York, in 1921 he appointed Miss Storm Jameson, the novelist, to be his English agent in the same way that Mr. Douglas Goldring, another novelist, has long acted for Mr. Seltzer. Miss Jameson did excellent work for Mr. Knopf, but that did not prevent her from marrying Mr. Guy Chapman of the English publishing firm of Chapman and Dodd. Now, latterly Chapman and Dodd went out

of business. Mr. Knopf has always been noted for his ability to seize an opportunity. He saw one when Mr. Chapman became foot-loose, and forthwith decided to open a London branch with Mr. Chapman in charge. It will be an interesting venture to watch.

It is perhaps rather late to talk about the effect which the general strike had on the book business in this country, but as my last letter was despatched to you before that "unique event," I may allow myself a few words on this head. Until the strike occurred books were doing extremely well, and both publishers and booksellers were looking forward to the best year since the War. Mr. J. G. Wilson, the head of J. and E. Bumpus, the Oxford-street booksellers, was telling me only just before the general paralysis how well things were going. The strike, of course, stopped all that. One publishing firm did only £7 of business in a day. At most offices where I looked in I found all discussion of books had to give way to a talk about the only topic. Many publishers seemed to be absolutely in despair. Some were absent, having rushed off to volunteer. When I called at Constable's I found that Mr. Michael Sadleir, the novelist son of Sir Michael Sadler, who in addition is a director of Constable & Co., was away driving an omnibus somewhere. But as I write, business is practically back to normal and is being carried on with renewed vigor.

The retirement of Mr. W. L. Courtney from the chairmanship of Chapman and Hall, Ltd., and from the board of directors, reminds one that it is 32 years since this veteran figure of English letters assumed the editorship of the *Fortnightly Review*. Though he is now aged 76, he will retain that post. But I gather that he has also given up the literary editorship of the *Daily Telegraph*, which he had so efficiently held for as long as I can remember. Mr. Courtney was born at Poona, in India. His first book, and he has brought out a large number, was "The Metaphysics of John Stuart Mill." It appeared in 1879. He began as a schoolmaster, and was the head of Somersetshire College at Bath as far back as 1873. The titles of some of his books sum him up, I think, rather well: "The Feminine Note in Fiction" and "The Literary Man's New Testament," for example. His wife—Aunt Janet, they used to call her at the Times Book Club—was a pioneer feminist. She is one of those rare women who admit their age—61—and began work as a member of the Royal Commission on Labor which was appointed in 1892. Then she went to the Bank of England, on to the staff of the Encyclopædia Britannica, was librarian of

the Times Book Club, and again with the E. B. Recently she published her "Reminiscences."

Mr. Courtney is succeeded as chairman of Chapman and Hall by Mr. Arthur Waugh, another man who has long combined authorship with publishing. He has been the firm's managing director for nearly 25 years. Before that he represented Henry Holt and Co. in London; from 1895 to 1902 he was with Kegan, Paul and Co., and back in 1894 he was a sub-editor on the *New Review*. He has written a "Life" of Tennyson and many other books. His elder son is Mr. Alec Waugh, who is also a director of Chapman and Hall.

Mr. Aldous Huxley, who, when you read this will be back from his tour of the world, has been commissioned to write a book on Florence. The city he liked best in America was Los Angeles.

Sir Valentine Chirol, who from 1899 to 1912, was director of the *Times* Foreign Department, has just completed his "Recollections." As a contrast with Mr. Beverly Nichols, who wrote his at 25, Sir Valentine has waited until he was 74 before doing his. He should have a lot to say. He was educated in France and Germany, worked in the Foreign Office from 1872 to 1876, and has travelled in Turkey, Egypt, Persia, India, the Far East, the United States, and the British Dominions. His recent volume on "India" has received much notice.

I report to you two new women novelists of importance. The first is Professor Gilbert Murray's daughter Rosalind, who is also the wife of Mr. A. J. Toynbee. Her tale is called "The Happy Tree" and will be published by Chatto and Windus. Mr. Toynbee, by the way, after being a tutor at Balliol, and in the Foreign Office and at the Peace Conference, became Korae Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek at London University. He made his name with the public, though, with his revelations about Asia Minor since the War. The second is Miss Kathleen Freeman of the University of Wales. Her story is entitled "Martin Hanner" and has been published by Jonathan Cape. She is also bringing out "The Life and Work of Solon" with the Oxford University Press.

John Cotton Dana, librarian of Newark Public Library, in a paper read before the Association of Museums last month, deplored the neglect by museums of the printing art. "Will the work of the printer never find in art museums the high place it should have there?" he asked. "Printing produces in mere words more things that interest the eye and the brain than do all other crafts combined. In its more studied forms it is as beautiful as the outgivings of any art, and adds to beauty an irresistible appeal to the mind. Yet the printer's products occupy no place among 'museum pieces.' Is this because printing is an industry? Or of today? Or of this country? More probably it is because the museum eye is blinded by conventions."

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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

- COROT. By *Marc Lafargue*. Dodd, Mead. \$1.75.
 WHY WE LOOK AT PICTURES. By *Carl H. P. Thurston*. Dodd, Mead. \$4.
 ARCHITECTURE EXPLAINED. By *Howard Robertson*. Doran. \$2.50 net.
 MORE THINGS THAT MATTER. By *Lord Riddell*. Doran. \$2.50 net.

Belles Lettres

- ROLLO'S JOURNEY TO CAMBRIDGE. By *John T. Wheelright and Frederic J. Stimson*. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.
 THE THREAT OF LEISURE. By *George Barton Cutten*. Yale University Press. \$2.
 SELECTED PROSE OF JOHN MILTON. Edited by *Malcolm W. Wallace*. Oxford University Press. 80 cents.
 ANTHEIL AND THE TREATISE ON HARMONY. By *Ezra Pound*. Paris: Three Mountains Press.

Biography

- DOSTOEVSKY PORTRAYED BY HIS WIFE. Dutton. \$4.25.
 R. L. S. AND HIS SINE QUA NON. By the Gamekeeper (Adelaide A. Boodle). Scribners. \$1.50.
 BRAUNYMAN. By *James Stevens*. Knopf. \$2.50 net.
 GEORGE MEREDITH. By *J. B. Priestley* (English Men of Letters). Macmillan. \$1.25.
 WALT WHITMAN. By *John Bailey* (English Men of Letters). Macmillan. \$1.25.
 HUBERT PARRY. By *Charles L. Graves*. Macmillan. \$2.
 SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA. By *Ernest Gilliat Smith*. Dutton. \$2.50.

Education

- THE STORY OF OUR AMERICAN PEOPLE. By *Charles F. Horn*. New York: U. S. History Publishing Co. 2 vols.
 ELEMENTARY ECONOMICS. By *Fred Rogers Fairchild, Edgar Stevenson Furniss, and Norman Sydney Buck*. Macmillan. 2 vols.
 THE SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE. By *Mabel Mason Carlton and Henry Fish Carlton*. Scribners. 80 cents.
 THE STORY OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. By *Mabel Mason Carlton and Henry Fish Carlton*. Scribners. 72 cents.
 ALPHABET CARDS. By *Edith Conrad*. Scribners.
 PAUL PAINE'S MAP OF AMERICA'S MAKING. Bowker. \$2.50.
 SEX EDUCATION. By *Philip Zenger*. Appleton. \$1.50.
 PROJECTS AND THE PROJECT METHODS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION. By *G. A. Schmidt*. Century. \$2.50.
 NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STYLE. By *Theodore Goodman*. Appleton. \$1.75.

Fiction

- IF TODAY HAVE NO TOMORROW. By *OLIVE GILBREATH*. Dutton. 1926. \$2.

Michael Acar, Miss Gilbreath's protagonist, is the descendant of an adventuring Scot who, settling in Russia two centuries earlier, has there founded an enduring family and fortune. In this alien land, succeeding Acars have always returned to Britain for their wives, educated their children beyond the Russian frontiers, retained their English citizenship, and otherwise kept unbroken allegiance to their original nativity. The Kerensky régime has begun to totter when we first meet Michael, the hereditary head of his family's large manufacturing and landed properties which, upon the establishment of the Soviet Government, he tries to save from confiscation through the protection of his British citizenship. He fails courageously in this, as it is manifest throughout the story he will fail in achieving all save grief and disillusionment. Although a prominent factor in its course, Michael is essentially subordinate to one tremendous event, the Bolshevik Revolution, which dominates the entire book, and it is in her depiction of the titanic upheaval that the author is at her best. Her individual scenes show us (without sentimental recrimination) the decayed, parasitic aristocracy sinking defiantly and licentiously to its doom. She writes here with brilliant flashes of vividness and observation which seem to bear the seal of eye-witness contact, but beyond these passages her book is not of an equal impressiveness.

- THE UNKNOWN GODDESS. By *RUTH CROSS*. Harpers. 1926. \$2.

A sombre story, well told and plausible, of the misunderstanding and injustice suffered by a girl of strong native gifts, this novel is a marked improvement upon the author's preceding "Golden Cocoon." Nori Higgins, the heroine, is a robust and lovely

student at the high school of a Texas town where her newly prosperous family, goaded on by an iron-willed, ambitious mother, is attempting to establish itself in the higher circles of the community's life. The girl is brutally outraged by a profligate visiting evangelist, subjected forcibly to a criminal operation, and afterward sent away in an endeavor to spare the family from scandal. But Noel's reputation in the home town to which she seldom returns is forever cruelly black, innocent as she is of intentional wrongdoing and try as she may to refute the rumor of her in chastity. In the years of her exile she becomes a trained nurse, a medical university student, a doctor and "healer" of marvelous skill. Her career is one continued self-sacrifice to the service of others, a ruthless ordeal without gratitude or recompense, but finally, when we had given up hope that joy would ever be hers, she meets with a meagre and tardy reward.

- THE DEVIL. By *LEO TOLSTOY*. Harpers. 1926. \$2.

One day late in 1880, at Yasnaya Polyana in the province of Tula, Russia, a middle-aged landholder of Christian Socialistic proclivities, rushed up to the startled tutor of his children, exclaiming, "I am in danger of falling into temptation. Save me!" The temptation was named Domna, and was also the family cook. The landholder was named Lyof Nikolavitch Tolstoy. Nine years later this gentleman, who was also intermittently a writer, and always a social reformer, and crank, sketched a story on this incident, which Mr. Aylmer Maude has now for the first time translated into English. It is fragmentary and unsatisfactory as a literary production, but it is extremely characteristic of the author. The stark bones of a powerful novel are there, though neither the characters nor the incidents have been raised above the rudimentary working-model stage. Tolstoy's hero, the myopic Eugen Irtenev, makes hard, slavish-puritanical, going of it, set between a strapping sun-tanned peasant wench and an unhealthy wife who is much given to falling into ditches while pregnant. Two endings, equally bloody and equally abrupt, are offered.

It might be interesting to know just why Tolstoy laid aside what might have been worked up into an affair of some moment. One suspects, however, that it is because the plot, besides being unavoidably "used" in its elements, presents only one monotonous conflict, with its outcome foreordained. By contrast the fatal passion of Anna and Vronsky in "Anna Karenina," for instance, has a dual and social significance. But here there is no discussion whatever of the effects of Irtenev's misconduct upon anyone other than himself. The monster,—for Tolstoy obviously considers that there is one,—is purely phallic, and is the fault of the woman in the case, who escapes all the consequences of her act by simply continuing to be unaware of its monstrous nature. As it stands, there is the crude contact with the soil, and the flaring misogyny of Tolstoy to lend force, point, and interest to what might otherwise seem little more than commonplace. In addition, while a great deal is still heard about the essential differences of the Anglo-Saxon and the Slav soul, it must be with a start of guilty recognition that most readers of this translation will come upon Eugen Irtenev, who is capable of deciding that he has done no wrong in taking the peasant girl, yet simultaneously "a stricter judge in the depths of his soul did not approve of it." Thereupon, however, he tortures himself to death over it, which may be more distinctively Russian. "The Devil" is filled with the great but disordered strength of Tolstoy. As in all his work, he is more concerned with his thesis than with his revelation, and his primary quality remains extra-literary, since in the end the philosophical and ideological skeleton succeeds in rubbing through the scanty covering of narrative.

- CUBWOOD. By *W. R. SUNDERLAND LEWIS*. A. & C. Boni. 1926. \$2.

The author of this British mystery story has attempted to combine his horrors with a study of childhood. While he has not always been successful in fusing these two unusual elements, he frequently produces an original and grotesque effect by placing his schoolboys in the midst of gloomy haunted woods, where corpses are not unnaturally found hanging from the branches. The tale is told by one of the children,

grown-up, and looking back on the experiences of his youth. Perhaps it would be more wholly convincing and satisfactory if this method of narrative were less involved. So much irrelevant matter is included that the interest is slowed down and lost in the wealth of laborious detail. As Mr. Walter de Mare suggests in his politely encouraging introduction, the book must have been a hobby with the author, and one into which he has put a great deal of his own experience. But it is a question whether it might not be more readable and efficient as a mystery if it had been severely cut. The children are worth knowing, though.

- A BEAUTIFUL BLUNDER. By *WILLIAM E. BARTON*. Bobbs-Merrill. 1926. \$5.

The most beautiful prose composition growing out of the Civil War is Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby. Indirectly it was suggested by a letter from Adjutant-General Schouler of Massachusetts to War-Governor John A. Andrews of that state, indicating that Mrs. Bixby's five sons had fallen in battle. Andrews, conveying the information to the War Department at Washington, commented that Mrs. Bixby's "is a case so remarkable that I really wish a letter might be written by the President of the United States, such as a noble mother of five dead sons so well deserves." The War Department's request for verification of the deaths of the five sons brought the requisite data from General Schouler, obtained from Mrs. Bixby. The President wrote the letter, sent it to Schouler, who gave it to Mrs. Bixby on Thanksgiving Day, 1864. On the following day it was reproduced in the Boston Transcript and the Boston Advertiser. Dr. Barton, in 136 pages, tells the story of the Bixby sons and their mother. Although he verifies the authenticity of the letter, he shows that diligent search has failed to disclose the original. He shows that, instead of five sons falling in battle, as Lincoln was informed, only two lost their lives. A third served his enlistment out, and the other two, he concludes from slightly clouded testimony, deserted from the ranks; one of these to the Confederates side, and died in North Carolina. The fifth son, following his desertion, wandered to the Middle West and died in obscurity in Chicago, 1909. The

book is sufficiently documented to make it authoritative. The fate of the Bixby sons, however, has no historical significance outside of their being the occasion of one of the most artistic bits of literature in English prose.

- COOMBE ST. MARYS. By *MAUD DIVER*. Houghton Mifflin. 1926. \$2.50.

Mrs. Diver retells in a modern setting with considerable grace and skill the old tale of the girl heiress whose guardian attempts to divert her wealth to his own uses. Primarily her novel is a study of the decay of the English upper classes in post-war times. Coombe St. Mary's, the ancestral home of Lord Carlyon, proves to be the stock country residence of a thousand of the peers we meet in modern fiction. But the author escapes the usual snares with surprising art, and fills her canvas with fresh colors and figures in such a way as to contrast the disappearing values of the late Victorian generation with our own not to the disadvantage of either. Her one grave mistake, the character of the war profiteer, derives rather too closely from the pictures in *Punch* which are notably unreliable. This is a good, long, lazy book for a summer day and we recommend it as likely to be overlooked among the welter of more raucous but less conscientious novels of the season.

- MR. MOFFATT. By *Chester Francis Cobb*. Doran. \$2.50 net.
 EAST OF MANSION HOUSE. By *Thomas Burke*. Doran. \$2 net.
 WINTER WHEAT. By *Almeida St. John Adcock*. Doran. \$2.50 net.
 CHILD OF THE NORTH. By *Ridgwell Cullum*. Doran. \$2 net.
 THE RED LEDGER. By *Frank L. Packard*. Doran. \$2 net.
 THE MANTLE OF MASQUERADE. By *Stewart M. Emery*. Dutton. \$2.
 THE COMEBACK. By *Joe Mills*. New York: Sears. \$1.50.
 TREASURE ISLAND. By *R. L. Stevenson*. Oxford University Press. 80 cents.
 THE STORY OF A COUNTRY TOWN. By *E. W. Howe*. A. & C. Boni. \$1.25.
 THE HISTORY OF HENRY ESOMOND, ESQ. By *William Makepeace Thackeray* (Modern Readers' Series). Macmillan.
 DON QUIXOTE. By *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra* (Modern Readers' Series). Macmillan.

(Continued on next page)

New Books for
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