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(PRINT OUT)

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

TWO OR THREE GRACES. By Aldous Huxley (Doran).

DEPENDENT AMERICA. By William Redfield (Houghton Mifflin).

THINGS SEEN AND HEARD. By Edgar J. Goodspeed (University of Chicago Press).

L. D. W., East Haven, Conn., asks for a choice of one-act plays for amateurs: the only requisite seems to be that they must be funny.

THE first play in "Double Demon and other one-act plays," by Herbert, Sladen Smith, Mayor, and Simpson (Appleton), is one of the most sparkling entertainments I have come upon in some time. When I ran through it in the course of a lecture last year the delight of the audiences convinced me that this would be, if well acted, an ideal play for small stages. A jury is considering its verdict, impeded by the presence among them of a husband and wife constitutionally unable to take the same side on anything. They convert each other as the Wright Brothers are said to have done in their early discussions, leaving the deadlock upside down but otherwise unchanged. How it is resolved and under what unexpected circumstances the curtain descends, I leave for the audience to enjoy. In the same book—one of the British Drama League Series—is "St. Simeon Stylites," by F. Sladen Smith, which the British Drama League has chosen for its participation in the New York Little Theatre Tournament in May. This satiric comedy has a Shavian taste only because anything British and brilliant is bound to taste something like Shaw. Its hero is more like the pillar saint in Anatole France's "Thais" than a strictly theological figure: on a platform high above the city, he is visited by a pilgrim, a king, a lady no better than she should be and much prettier, and the prince in whose interests they are tempting him to descend—the devil, of course. The reason why he stays is a flash of insight into human nature: if the producer has the courage of his convictions in the matter of scenery and lighting, and if, according to the author's directions, he carefully avoids realism, this should be a success of the type that brightened the first seasons of the Washington Square Players in the old Bandbox.

Christopher Morley's "Rehearsal" is surefire fun and very easy to give: so is Miss Millay's "Two Slatterns and a King," both are in the series of Appleton's Short Plays in paper covers, and some of the recent additions to this series read as if they would act well. "The Flattering Word," by George Kelly (Little, Brown), is more than funny, though it is all of that: it appeals to any sort of audience and in printed form gives lasting pleasure. Based on the universal truth that the one statement certain to please is "I thought you were on the stage," it sees through one of our dearest delusions without poking holes through it.

A book of interest to amateur actors lately published by Appleton is "The Art of Make-up," by Helena Chalmers, detailed and practical, with pictures that make its points even clearer.

Here's a Macedonian outcry. Mme. A. G., in Simbirsk, Russia, on the Volga River, wants to keep hens. In fact, she is now keeping ten of them, who notwithstanding the cold are giving her a few eggs. She needs a popular book on poultry-keeping, suitable for this climate, and for the nurture of about fifty hens under the simplest conditions. The request is relayed by A. E. B., New York, and the books have gone by mail, but the advice will be useful to other readers of this section.

THE best little book on poultry-keeping in the climate of the northern New England States, approximately that of Simbirsk, is "Poultry," written by Professor A. W. Richardson, head of the poultry department of the University of New Hampshire, and published by Harper in their handbook series at \$1.50. She needs also an up-to-date English Grammar in a teacher's edition, for her classes in a school of languages now far enough along to receive English grammar lessons in English. Teacher's College, to whose faculty this

matter was referred, reply that one of their instructors who had had much experience in teaching English to foreign adults, recommends "Grammar to Use," by Lewis and Lynch (Winston), saying that it is by far the best grammar so far published for this purpose.

G. G., New York City, preparing a paper on juvenile delinquency, asks which book will give him plenty of data.

"THE YOUNG DELINQUENT," by Cyril Burt (Appleton), at this writing the latest contribution to this large and growing literature, provides for student, teacher, parent, or anyone to whom the interests of children are dear, not only documentation but an example of the frame of mind and heart in which to approach it. This is the first of a series of three books on the child of subnormal mentality: the others present cases of backward and of unstable children, respectively intellectually and emotionally under par. This study of the child whose moral character is subnormal is the result of wide experience and an open mind, and the conclusions reached through these cases are none the less valuable when applied to the study of youth in general. "The Revolt of Modern Youth," by Ben B. Lindsey and Wainwright Evans (Boni & Liveright), is based on the experience and blazes with the ideas of Judge Lindsey. This, too, is applicable to society at large.

H. O. R., Jersey City, N. J., asks for post-war guide books or records of travel in Ireland.

"HERE'S IRELAND," by Harold Speakman (Dodd, Mead), is a literally "rambling" narrative: he traverses the island with the aid of a "wee horse" whose long grey ears and wise countenance beam on the beholder from the frontispiece. What he sees and hears is set down less in story form than in vignettes: their pictorial quality matches the illustrations, which are from paintings by the author not so brilliant as those in his Chinese book, but as sympathetic. This is one of the travel books that make me convinced that there will be a hole in my life until I go to this place: a good travel book should do this, I think.

The same firm that publish all those "beautiful" books, about Maine, Vermont, and other states ("Old America"), have lately issued a new Wallace Nutting volume of lovely photographic views, called "Ireland Beautiful." A favorite book for the guidance of the leisurely traveler in Ireland, Clifton Johnson's "The Land of Shamrock," has lately been brought back into print by Macmillan in a new format.

G. W. P., Los Angeles, Cal., strongly recommends to the man without definite religious affiliations but beginning to take a strong interest in personal religion, Harry Emerson Fosdick's "Modern Use of the Bible" (Macmillan), and Dean Inge's "Personal Religion and the Life of Devotion" (Longmans), saying of the latter "in fewer than one hundred pages it expresses, as only genius can, the loftiest of present-day religious ideals as held by a most advanced thinker."

P. F., New York City, asks on behalf of a foreign-born friend whose English is yet shaky if there is a book of set speeches that he can use as a guide, as he is often called upon to speak at banquets.

E. J. CLODE'S series of dollar handbooks include one called "Speeches," and another "Toasts and Anecdotes," by Paul Kearney, that might be useful. In the first there are sample speeches of various kinds. But before putting your trust altogether upon them, read "To the Ladies," by Kaufman and Connelly, and see what may happen if two men memorize the same speech.

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



Spring Song

At last, the long and heartily hoped-for time has arrived. The sun shine. The air has that "snap" which is so invigorating. People who ordinarily ride five blocks are now walking a mile. The housekeeper, so I am told, is getting ready to perform the annual rite known as "spring cleaning." New advertising posters for spring appear. There is a bibliography of spring books, although such a list is not entirely necessary inasmuch as any good book is appropriate at any time of the year.

* * * *

There is no doubt that certain topics are more popular during this period than others; travel, for instance. Those persons who take part in the annual spring exodus are anxious to find out many things about the places to which they are going and those of us who stay at home do dour spring traveling vicariously in the land of literature. The garden, too, is getting attention and many horticulturists, amateur and professional, turn to the printed page for information as to new ways and means of developing the soil.

* * * *

But there are still thousands of people who sit and moan because they too cannot go abroad, and who do not realize that there are many of us who have been in new and sometimes strange places without ever having left, not the armchair by the fire, but the wicker chair or the hammock on the porch. There are just as many who, living in cities where gardening is impossible, derive a great deal of pleasure from the work of those who so vividly portray in type the growing of flowers.

* * * *

I feel that it is the duty of all of us who do know these pleasures to tell the uninitiated where they may be had. We owe it to ourselves and to those persons who have given us our literature, to perform the necessary introductions.

* * * *

The *Saturday Review of Literature* will interest you and help them; and you will find that the bookmen and women who are members of the *American Booksellers' Association* will be happy to aid in choosing spring and summer reading.

ELLIS W. MEYERS,
Executive Secretary,
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OUTSIDE my window a robust gentleman is crying strawberries (I write this in early May) in a not unmelodious voice; thereby, through his very intonation, persuading me that there is something of immediate importance in my choice, *pro or con*, of a new box of fresh strawberries. Of course, there is not; any more than there actually is in my choice of a new book. Yet I would the purveyors of books cried their wares thus through the city streets. I would that heralds went forth in parti-coloured tabards, followed by a parade of white chargers surmounted by extremely pretty girls scattering announcements of new books to the cheering populace, perhaps flinging sample copies to all and sundry. There would be pith and spice in the comments along the curb. "Fall Announcements" would assume a proper gala air. A circus show of tinsel and tulle, the blare of silver and golden trumpets! I wish that the opening of the Spring and Fall publishing seasons had days of carnival set apart for the broaching of vintage (surely the juice of the grape has become a soft drink!), for feast and public street dances, for a fanfare of general jollity. This might cure us somewhat of taking books so seriously.

Strawberries are an appetizing and nutritious fruit. There is nothing better than the strawberry in its proper season, properly served. But we do not live for strawberries. Yet many of the present day do live for books; they cannot adjust or conduct their lives without printed precedent. It is like to become a disease. Not that there should be no books. That is not my suggestion. I have no desire to imitate King Cnut's disastrous conversation with the sea. Not that there should be less books; for every day the tide sets in more and more strongly; but that books should cease in a measure to be so our masters, and we so far their slaves.

Philosophically considered, it is extremely odd that the convoluted nervous substance in the skulls of vertebrates should be subject to inflammation because the sensitive jelly of the organ of sight secretes certain intimations from a certain arrangement of indentations of potent nigrity upon a smoothed and blanched fibrous warp and woof. This is, if calmly considered, a fantastic absurdity. Yet the intimations so secreted have the uncanny power of strongly affecting whole acreages of human motor forces in action. Words put on pages, pages bound into books, books popped into colored jackets,—and forth every season scatter by tens and hundreds of thousands, nay millions, packages of potential balm, potential poison, potential dynamite,—and all due to the intense seriousness with which the average person regards the printed page. I have asked for holiday at such season, for days of feast and dance, for intense if hectic jollity, to make us forget, if but for an hour, how extremely potent—due to our craven countenance—are such forces sent abroad as, say, this season's array of novels.

Why do we take books so seriously; why do we so often leave a book as we so often leave the theatre, unconsciously mimetic at once of the characteristics of certain appealing types we have encountered between stamped and dyed covers? Why are we always saying of so and so, "He is a regular such-and-such!" naming a popular fictional character, or "She is a veritable this-and-that, for sure!" indicating another.

And then—people's theories; these "significant" novels that we all read,—of what are they truly significant save of a peculiar complex of inclinations on the part of the author? Either we know the tragic and universal situation beforehand, with which such books deal, or we had better remain unaware of it, in blissful idiocy, as long as possible. Along comes life with a bludgeon sooner or later—! And if a panacea for one of the universal ills with which our "significant" novelists are so intrigued is ever offered by them, it is sure to be but a doubtful panacea. Better a stalled ox where love is! I am aware that I misquote.

If you think that I am merely trying to be humorous I assure you that the increasing appetite of the new America for books has filled me with gibbering alarm. Today is a day of quotation marks, if it is not a day of asterisks. More than ever before, the gullible human race is seeking precept and example on the printed page. The precepts and examples furnished, in themselves, are sufficient to wreck civilization as we know it.

Well, why not wreck civilization? Any cries of "Yes, yes!" But, why not? Why not refuse to read, why not resist the Book

Menace, which Mr. Robert W. Chambers could paint, as he has painted other menaces, in so much more striking and hideous detail than I? Why not, with old Walt, return to live with the animals?

Now the great revelation! *It would be dull*; it would—I fear—become insufferably dull. We need not go to the length of imagining a Bertrand Russell on all fours in a field, endeavoring to masticate properly a cud of grass and clover, to realize just how strange a world it would be without books. No, the only thing to do with books is to treat them with proper healthy carelessness. So many famous essayists have by now sung the praises of books, so many clever writers have fawned upon them and scratched their old scuffed leather or new cloth backs, that books have become insufferably spoiled. Samuel Butler saw the coming domination of man by the machine. I see the haughty tyranny of books over man as almost an accomplished fact. At night I have nightmares of the last man in the world alone in a field and pursued furiously by several fat octavo volumes. The man is overtaken, the great books pounce—but the nightmare has been vivid as to particulars, which I will spare you.

Spank books occasionally, kick them around the room, refuse to be bullied by them. Shout them down, yell "I don't believe it at all!" and "Pooh! Pooh!" and "Idiotic! Preposterous!" This may seem harsh treatment, unworthy of your better nature; but steel yourself to resist their invasion of your home and office as oracular guides, philosophers, and friends. They are not any such thing! If you give them any leeway they will get you by the scruff of the neck and shake the soul out of your body. They will divorce you from sympathy with your human relations and friends. They will give you eyestrain, and send you to Dr. Bates. They will cause your home to fall into disrepair and your important affairs to suffer confusion. Your personality will become a patchwork of fictional personalities. You will come to quiver with nervousness at sight of a new package from the publisher. The whole truth: *you simply cannot live up to them!* But you will try, poor fool,—you will try!

It has taken a year, but I have at last freed myself from the insidious domination of books. Today when I enter my study my coming is preluded by a loud rustle as the volumes cringe together upon the shelves. I fling my hat and stick carelessly upon the table and light a cheroot with a flourish. Then I sink into a deep Morris chair. I clap my hands. "You! Commere!" With a scrambling rush the latest novel detaches itself from its row on the shelf and slides trembling to the floor. It staggers over to me, palpitates with fear. It blanches and quivers before me on the carpet, seeking to hide its miserable hands in its front matter. "Well!" I bawl. It hops agitatedly to my knee. Then, making a terrifying gesture as if I would tear its cover glueing from its back, I open it with a rending motion. I assume my monocle and a lofty indifference. I settle back superciliously to read—

Remember! It is the only way to handle them. They do not appreciate kindness. The adulation of bibliophiles, which has so accumulated through our book-ridden ages, they have come to despise. Now I am their master. I crack the whip, they cringe. So be it with all of you; stand your ground,—be men and women! Farewell.

THE PHOENICIAN.

Vol. IX of Charles Evan's "American Bibliography" has made its appearance, and is being delivered to subscribers at \$25 a copy. This work is a chronological dictionary of all books, pamphlets and periodical publications printed in what is now the United States of America from the genesis of printing in 1639 to and including the year 1820. The present volume covers the years 1793 and 1794, and it is apparent that several volumes more must be issued to cover the increased printing activity of the beginning of the last century. The new volume is much more complete than its predecessors, many discoveries of titles having been made since the last volume was published several years ago. The work is privately printed for the author at the University of Chicago Press.

In the recent Chiesa sale at the American Art Galleries a Persian illuminated manuscript brought the high price of \$14,000. This manuscript was written about 1550, and contains the complete works in verse of the Persian poet Djami, and is still preserved in the original Oriental binding. The manuscript is written in Persian characters.

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