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The New Books Biography

(Continued from preceding page)

EARLY DAYS IN UPPER CANADA. Letters of John Langton. Edited by W. A. LANGTON. Toronto: Macmillan. 1927.

A graduate of Cambridge in the Canadian backwoods is a somewhat unusual figure. John Langton was a Lancashire lad, the son of a wealthy business man; after being schooled on the Continent and taking his university degree, he emigrated to Ontario in 1833, at the age of twenty-five. Love of adventure was one motive, and a decline in the family fortunes furnished another. Establishing a large farm upon Sturgeon Lake, for a dozen years he labored and prospered as a log-cabin pioneer. Then, having married and acquired some capital, he became interested in lumbering, invested in mills, went to live in Peterborough, and was soon a figure in politics. After sitting for some years in the legislature he was made auditor of the province, and later became vice-chancellor of the University of Toronto. There are interesting pages upon Peterborough, which was a queer colony of English half-pay officers, and said at this time to present the best society in Canada; while in conclusion some light is thrown upon the struggling early days of the University.

But the chief value of the book lies in the letters written during 1833-1847, and showing how an English university man took the hardships and labors of a pioneer farmer. To Langton it was something of a Robinson Crusoe adventure. He had his books; he was interested in botany and ornithology; and he kept up his contacts with the best people of the province, from the governor down. There was no real danger, though wolves and other wild beasts were plentiful. He seems rather to have enjoyed the immense amount of work necessary to make his log cabin habitable and clear his land. Explaining everything in detail to his father, he sets forth the agricultural methods of the Ontario frontier; the profits and losses upon oats, potatoes, turnips, wheat, barley, and pigs; the crudities of transportation; the way in which his neighboring farmers got entangled in debt to the storekeepers; the diet of the country—salt pork, beans, potato soup, bad Canadian whiskey, and in summer fish, ducks, and venison; and much besides. He kept his eye on politics, and though by no means a Tory, denounces "that little factious wretch Mackenzie." The book is an addition of value to North American pioneer narratives.

SECRETS OF THE WHITE HOUSE. By Elizabeth Jeffray. Cosmopolitan. \$2.50.

EARLY LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN MORLEY. By F. W. Hirst. Macmillan. 2 vols. \$10.50.

KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS. By D. Riaganov. International. \$2.50.

TWELVE GREAT MODERNISTS. By Lawrence F. Abbott. Doubleday, Page.

THE AGE OF DANGER. By Augustus Muir. Bobbs-Merrill. \$2.

THE WOMAN ON THE BALCONY. By Rose Caylor. Boni & Liveright.

Drama

THE PLAYS OF RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN. Edited by IOLO A. WILLIAMS. Dial. 1927. \$3.

This edition reprints Sheridan's seven plays in a form convenient for the general reader. There is no critical apparatus save an amateurish introduction of a dozen pages. The editor asserts that he has taken pains to provide a more authoritative text of "The School for Scandal," but he has not indicated his variant readings.

DISCORDANT ENCOUNTERS: PLAYS AND DIALOGUES. By EDMUND WILSON. A. & C. Boni. 1926. \$2.50.

On the surface, little of the crusading spirit informs the bristling pages of Edmund Wilson's "Discordant Encounters." Satire, dressed in the deceptive garments of detached impersonality is the palpable intent. Mr. Wilson artfully finds ironic amusement in the present form of the everlasting struggle between reaction and insurgency in esthetic, social, and scientific ideals. His partisanship is, in the main, cunningly veiled. He does, however, reveal himself with rather surprising sentimentality in the full length play, "The Crime in the Whistler Room." Technically this drama, with its more than implied plea for the younger generation is the least successful offering in the volume, quite without the sardonic and often deliciously whimsical detachment of the other contributions.

The popular expressionism of the modern theatre, exploited notably in "Roger Bloomer" and "The Adding Machine," is courted in "The Crime in the Whistler Room." There is a phantasmagoria episode in which the realistic substance of the opening and close of the play is fantastically remotivated. Early in the century the device won favor for "The Poor Little Rich Girl" and Hauptmann's "Hannele," but it was, of course, not new then. Mr. Wilson uses it to give an expressionist view of the predicament of his heroine. With a theatric throwback to Victorianism, the young lady has been "betrayed." Mr.

Wilson champions her,—as who would not?—against a deadening conventional environment peopled by deadening pedantic uplifters, much concerned about the position of the drawing room table and the symphonic effects of Whistler paintings. Those characters who are rebels, have been skilfully portrayed and the contemporary flavor of their speech has the authentic tang. The representatives of the elder generation are so much cardboard.

The weaknesses of this major effort—in point of bulk—are not extended to the shorter pieces. "The Poet's Return," a dialogue between Paul Rosenfeld and Matthew Josephson, "The Delegate from Great Neck," presenting Van Wyck Brooks and Scott Fitzgerald; "Mrs. Alving and Oedipus," with a "Professor of Fifty and a Journalist of Twenty-five," as disputants, and "In the Galapagos," involving William Beebe and a Marine Iguana, are most delectable specimens of sophisticated and pertinent comment. The contrasts of personalities are adroitly sustained and there is both lively cerebral humor and very suggestive observation in these fancies. "Cronkhites Clocks," subtitled "A Pantomime with Captions, for a Score by Leo Ornstein," is gorgeous, undisciplined fooling on the not precisely novel theme of super-business organization. But the high key of the fun atones for this rehearsal of the obvious.

Mr. Wilson writes with polish and taste and a sense of character values. His portrait of Scott Fitzgerald is a gem of satiric allusion, and there is something like a heroic glow in Mr. Beebe's transcendental and scientific rhapsody in the uninspiring presence of that embodiment of "laissez-faire," which is the torpid great sea lizard of far-off Galapagos.

THE FIELD GOD AND IN ABRAHAM'S BOSOM. By Paul Green. McBride. \$2 net.

OUT OF THE SEA. By Don Marquis. Doubleday, Page.

Education

PROCRUSTES OR THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH EDUCATION. By M. ALDERTON PINK. Dutton. 1927. \$1.

This little book (in the Today and Tomorrow series) is big with common sense. The author is writing about English education, but what he says may be read with profit by American educators. "The English," says Mr. Pink, "are gradually coming to acknowledge that not every child is a potential Prime Minister." We were not aware that the English had ever been subject to that delusion; certainly they have

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never embraced the dogma with the fervor which leads us to prepare every little boy to be President.

Some relation must be maintained between the pupil's training and his potentialities. It is wasteful, even cruel, to prepare thousands for positions which they can never fill. "Secondary schools," says Mr. Pink, "are designed as training ground for university students, but only three per cent of the pupils ever reach the universities." The percentage in America is higher, but we may well consider whether we have not let Utopianism blind us to facts. Not less education, but a different and less standardized variety, is needed.

When the author speaks of the English universities,—not Oxford and Cambridge, but the newer ones—we feel we must shout, "Hear, hear" as he warns them against some of the worst evils which assail our American institutions of higher learning. An increasing number of educators in this country will agree with Mr. Pink, and with Dr. Johnson, that lectures of the ordinary university lecture-course type were "rendered obsolete as soon as books were rapidly and cheaply printed." It is better to read and think than simply to take dictation. While agreeing with Mr. Pink that "the modern university must be a centre of research," we also must realize that "the danger is that it will neglect to be also a centre of education." Even some of the most reputable historians believe that "the scientific or pseudo-scientific spirit applied to history has tended to destroy the sense of values."

Thank you, Mr. Pink. We hope your book will be widely read on this side of the water.

CHILD GUIDANCE. By SMILEY BLANTON and MARGARET GRAY BLANTON. Century. 1927. \$2.25.

One of the most significant paragraphs in this very suggestive book is the following: "Education for successful emotional and habitual living begins at birth. And since it begins with birth, it deals with such commonplace things as sleeping and eating and moving and crying. It never leaves the plane of the small and the apparently insignificant, for no matter how spectacular the result it is composed of small acts, performed day by day and moment by moment." Many of the recent books on child guidance treat of such exaggerated conditions that the average parent is justified in saying: "That is all very interesting, but my child is not like that." Dr. Blanton and his wife have dealt with the situations which enter into every child's daily routine and have known how to discuss the slight deviations which are the puzzles (they have hardly assumed the proportions of a problem) of the mother of every child.

The suggestions with respect to helping the child to acquire eating, sleeping, evacuation, walking, and talking habits, and the ability to adjust to other people, are based on sound medical and psychological knowledge and a wide experience with children maladjusted in varying degrees. The authors are particularly well qualified to give suggestions with respect to speech training. The book should be eagerly received by those parents who are making a real effort to see their job in perspective, and should prove very helpful to social workers who must point out to less understanding parents the shortcomings in their management. The written record at stated intervals of a child's personality changes (in such traits as self-confidence, aggressiveness, suggestibility, demonstrativeness, social adequacy) suggested in the third part of the book should help, as does all writing, to "make a precise man" of the parent. There is, however, always some danger that such a parent will become unduly self-conscious in his treatment of the child,—that his tongue will be theory bound. The danger of letting the child know that he is being formally rated cannot be overestimated and must be carefully guarded against.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG WORKERS. By OWEN D. EVANS. Macmillan. 1926.

Has the world turned upside down since Jacques described the second rôle of the human actor upon the terrestrial stage? How else can you explain these facts? There are five million workers in America between the ages of fourteen and twenty. Nearly a million—by Mr. Evans's very conservative estimate—are going to school while they work. Some go to continuation schools because they have to go, but most go to public or private evening schools, Y. M. and Y. W. C. A. schools, or university extension classes because they want to go. Why?

It seems that schools, and not schoolboys, have turned upside down. In all of these courses vocational training predominates.

"Culture" courses are often related to vocational training—in the student's mind probably, when not in the teacher's. Public continuation and evening schools emphasize health and citizenship education as well. But in general student and school agree in this: That education is worth while which trains for the "job higher up."

Mr. Evans's study gives a very readable and thorough account of these schools and their students and this strange community of purpose between them. His few and thoughtful comments reflect less upon that purpose than on the fitness of the machinery to achieve it. He shows the movement as characteristically American in efficiency, vigor, and rapid growth. In a few short years schools have been organized, technique developed, teachers mobilized, classrooms commandeered, a system of guidance installed, and surveys made to register results. Progress of course varies widely from one section to another, and between urban and rural district, and the south, as always, is behind. But progress is everywhere evident. Even the employers, at first hostile, are beginning to appreciate the value of the trained young worker over that of the cheap child worker. Here, as elsewhere, the idealism of the nineteenth century is finding realization in the enlightened selfishness of the twentieth,—a realization of which William Morris never dreamed. Perhaps he is turning in his grave, but Horatio Alger is marching on!

But has Alger really captured America, or only Young America? Do the millions of full-fledged adult students likewise seek education because it has success appeal? For the answer we must turn to the other volumes in this series on adult education. Through them, the Carnegie Corporation is rendering a much-needed service, not only to professional educators, but to all thoughtful Americans who would know their countrymen through the education that they seek.

CHAUCER'S "THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE." Edited by Kenneth Sisam. Oxford University Press. 50 cents.

OUR STATE OF WASHINGTON. By Herbert Clay Fish. Scribners. 88 cents.

HISTORY OF ILLINOIS. By August Maue. Scribners. 88 cents.

Fiction

THE FORTUNES OF HUGO. By DENIS MACKAIL. Houghton Mifflin. 1926. \$2.

This is a mild farce about a wealthy, good-natured, and "very British" imbecile who is in love with the daughter of a big newspaper publisher. Before he may marry her, he has to write something for which a newspaper would pay him. It is the sort of thing that P. G. Wodehouse, Ian Hay, and several other English writers turn out with such regularity.

THE PERILOUS ISLE. By OCTAVIA ROBERTS. Harpers. 1926. \$2.

This is a colorful adventure story set in France and San Domingo in the Napoleonic era. It provides clean and wholesome excitement for youthful readers.

CORSICAN JUSTICE. By J. G. SARASIN. Doran. 1927. \$2.

Lombardy, during the victorious invasion of the French in 1796, is the setting of this well written and exciting romance. Briefly, it is concerned with the transformation of a young noble émigré, Gaston de Saulx, from a fugitive exile to a patriot eager to serve in the Republican army of his former enemies. General Bonaparte personally is responsible for Gaston's change of heart, for it is he who pledges the young man to undertake a hazardous mission, the success of which will be generously rewarded. Gaston's perils and adventures are shared by a young girl who, disguised as a man, enlists in the small company of soldiers which he commands. The ensuing love affair of the couple is fraught with hardships inflicted upon them by a ruthless, but misguided, villain, the source also of the undercurrent of mystery of the tale.

NEVER GIVE ALL. By MAUDE RADFORD WARREN. Bobbs-Merrill. 1927. \$2.

Solemn, thinly cultured bores and prigs form the majority of the people presented in Mrs. Warren's new novel, the action of which begins in the second year of the century, when the young heroine, Teresa, marries Archie Lane, and ends more than a score of years later. The couple are intensely fond of themselves, Teresa being proudly confident of her intellectual equipment, Archie's self-esteem deriving from his gifts as a minor poet and success as an assistant professor in a Chicago university.

(Continued on next page)

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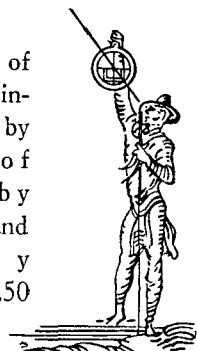
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