

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*.

W. M., Detroit, Mich., has been so pleased with Paul De Kruif's "Microbe Hunters" (Harcourt, Brace) that he asks for more books that deal with scientific subjects in a readable manner for the layman.

THIS matter has been dealt with by the man to whom the development of this type of scientific writing in the United States is largely due—E. E. Slosson, author of "Creative Chemistry" and head of "Science Service," Washington, D. C.—in one of the ten-cent pamphlets sold in all public libraries, the "Reading with a Purpose" series. The one on this subject is "The Physical Sciences," and I suggest that those beginning such a course of reading go through this first.

Of the books lately published William Albert Lecky's "The Growth of Biology" (Holt) is concerned with the work of individuals from Aristotle to our own times: it is simply written (but is by no means elementary) and would interest a thoughtful reader. "The Nature of the World and of Man" is a collection of articles by specialists on the world of physics and biology, prepared for students at the University of Chicago and issued in a large illustrated volume by the University Press there. "Our Mobile Earth," by Reginald A. Daly (Scribner), is a new and eminently readable geological work; there are not so many books in this field for the general reader. "Concerning the Nature of Things," by Sir William Bragg (Harper), tells of the new knowledge of the constitution of matter and other discoveries in physics.

EVERY now and then this department breaks its own rule of having nothing to do with quotations or lost poems, and finds one for somebody. The latest was one in which the words "waiting for the May" were the clue, and I report on it here, as well as to St. Ann's Monastery, Pennsylvania, because the poem, which I found in "The Home Book of Verse" (Holt) is curiously haunting. The title is "Spring Longings," it is by Denis Florence MacCarthy, and it begins

*Ah! my heart is weary waiting,
Waiting for the May,—*

And now "Darry," Manitoba, Canada, asks if anyone can put him on the track of a humorous story called "Peter's Wife's Mother and the Onion." It relates the adventures of Peter in rescuing his mother-in-law from Hell. L. L. M., Claremont, Cal., says I left out of my list of moral tales for small readers what she thinks is one of the most delightful works of the kind, "Charlie and his Kitten Topsy," with illustrations in silhouette. "The stories deal with various unfortunate habits of Charlie, and his reformation, in a whimsical way, so that the moral, though evident, is not offensive. My three-year-old cousin listened to it with enthusiasm every evening for weeks, and his five-year-old sister liked it almost as well." She cannot recall author or publisher; it is by Helen Hill and Violet Maxwell, and is published by Macmillan. There are several books that follow it; I remember "Charlie and his Puppy Bingo." This book might be kept in reserve by a correspondent who lately asked me for books for a young mother who was convinced that her son, one year old, was showing signs of original sin. I told her to remember what happened to milk teeth, and take heart.

K. H., Dallas, Texas, is preparing a list of fiction-writers who had journalistic careers.

[SENT such names as occurred to me—Edwin Meade Robinson's "Enter ery," Heywood Brown's "Gandle Follows is Nose," the novels of Richard Harding Davis and Sir Philip Gibbs, of Edna Ferber and Zona Gale—both genuine newspaper women before they appeared as novelists—Ben Hecht, Will Levington Comfort, Villa Cather (who was on the Pittsburgh *Daily Leader* from 1897 to 1901), G. W. Able, who was a reporter on the New Orleans *Picayune*, and Lafcadio Hearn. Since then the *Chicago Daily News* has published pamphlet, "Genius on Newspaper Row," containing the address given under the auspices of the William Vaughn Moody Foundation, April 14, 1927, by Henry Justin Smith. This has not only an imposing list of names, but an interesting discussion of the relation of genius to the daily grind. It shows "that many men of genius have

been eager to enter the newspaper business and that most of them have got out as soon as they could," and he believes that the work of journalism and that of pure literature are in the long run irreconcilable, but, says he, "Some of us, so long as we live, will never abandon the old-fashioned but thrilling idea that good writing for newspapers is worth while."


F. H. K., Charlotte, N. C., asks what important biographies of authors have been published in 1927. The list is asked for a club studying contemporary biography.

THE Murray Hill Biographies, intending not only to inform but in some measure "to haunt, to startle, and waylay," begin boldly with "Upton Sinclair: a Study in Social Protest," by Floyd Dell, and "Nathaniel Hawthorne: a Study in Solitude," by Herbert Gorman (Doran). The last-named author had already undergone treatment by Lloyd Morris in "The Rebellious Puritan" (Harcourt, Brace). Pelham Edgar's "Henry James: Man and Author," comes from Houghton Mifflin, and from McBride Ben Ray Redman's "Edwin Arlington Robinson." Slason Thompson's "Life of Eugene Field" (Appleton), as might be expected, has delightfully amusing scenes. The most unusual biography of our season is "The Road to the Temple," Susan Glaspell's life of George Cram Cook (Stokes).

For French authors we have had René Benjamin's "Balzac" (Knopf), that was making a sensation in France last year; "Flaubert's Youth," by Lewis Piaget Shanks (John Hopkins), "The Life of François Villon," by Francis Carco, who as a novelist is authority on the mentality of the underworld (Knopf), and Léon Pierre Quint's "Marcel Proust" (Knopf), while G. H. Johnstone's "Prosper Mérimée: a Mask and a Face," comes from Dodd, Mead in the Fall. We have had also a brilliant life of "The Ingenious Hidalgo, Miguel Cervantes," translated from the French of Han Ryner (Harcourt, Brace), and in the Fall is to come from Dutton J. G. Robertson's "Goethe." The inquirer for Erasmus literature for whom I printed a list some weeks since should notice that Macmillan has lately published the "Life, Character, and Influence of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam," by John Joseph Mangan, in two volumes. A sort of composite photograph of Tolstoy, with features not altogether like the accepted ones, is to be found in "Family Views of Tolstoy," edited by Aylmer Maude (Houghton Mifflin).

The Victorians are well represented. Michael Sadleir's fine "Trollope: a Commentary" (Houghton Mifflin), leads the list: this book comes after a long wait but the book is far better for coming at this time and from this author. Martha Garnett defends the relatives of the author of "The Way of All Flesh" in her "Samuel Butler and His Family Relations" (Dutton). I wonder if that novel really did release the inhibitions of the young in regard to discussing their families in public? At any rate, before its belated popularity began one might still hear the quaint old phrases about fouling one's own nest, washing dirty linen, etc. The "Letters" of George Gissing to members of his family should rank as autobiography; they are published by Houghton Mifflin. Putnam publishes "Frederick Harrison," by Austin Harrison, a study not only of the Positivist philosopher and historian but of the society of his period. The monumental life of Carlyle, by D. A. Wilson moves—if a monument may be said to move—to its fourth large volume, reaching "Carlyle at his Zenith" (Dutton) and covering the years 1848-53. I hope the biography lover has kept track of this fine work. There is a brilliant short life of "Disraeli," by D. L. Murray in the series of unusual political biographies edited by St. John Ervine for Little, Brown. The celebrated "Memoir of Jane Austen," by J. E. Austen-Leigh (Oxford), has been reprinted this year, and there is a new "Byron," by Albert Brecknock (Appleton), in the light of new information. George Cowling's "Chaucer" is being highly praised in England; it is to be published here by Dutton; it shows him as man of affairs as well as poet.

By this skimming of the surface for the present season it will be seen that the passion for biography shows no prospect of slackening. I am asked to make similar lists for musicians and for painters, but must defer them to a later issue.



THE MOB

\$2.50

by Vicente Blasco Ibañez

Author of "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse", Etc.

Ibañez

is at his best in this novel. With his marvelous feeling for color and drama, he pictures the social drege of Madrid and tells the story of a young Spanish writer struggling for success, romance and happiness.

E. P. Dutton & Company

Just Published

THE "CANARY" MURDER CASE

By S. S. Van Dine

While it was appearing as a magazine serial, this "Philo Vance" story drew more comment and aroused more speculation than any other detective story in years. "It should sell a million," says Wm. Allen White. \$2.50

BLUE VOYAGE

By Conrad Aiken

A ship in mid-Atlantic, moving between two continents, completely detached from the past and approaching an uncertain future—it would be hard to imagine a more fitting scene for a story built around an emotional climax in a man's life. \$2.50

CAPTAIN CAVALIER

By Jackson Gregory

This is a romance of California, but of a California that no longer exists—that of the descendants of Spanish conquistadors on the eve of the day when the Americans began to break in and take possession. \$2.00

At all bookstores

Charles Scribner's Sons, New York

by H. G. WELLS

A novel of the world. The flesh and the imagination.

MEANWHILE

The Picture of a Lady

Released August 1

\$2.50

DORAN BOOKS

Points of View

False Shift

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

*Magic casements opening on the foam
Of desolate seas . . .*

We read these lines so quoted by Mr. Colton in your issue of May twenty-first.

The difference in effect of the words "desolate" and "perilous" in this line is remarkable. For "perilous" suggests seas perhaps untraversed, romantic, and passionately unknown, "in faery lands forlorn." "Desolate seas," on the other hand, is a phrase that sets up in us no longing to explore, because, if the seas are dangerous, their danger has been taken account of, understood, and so dismissed. "Desolate" in this connection is a defeating word; "perilous" is inciting.

Of course the word "desolate" can be used with highly dramatic effect. In

*All night the ways of Heaven were desolate,
Long roads across a gleaming, empty sky* although the lines themselves are not of the first quality, the word is highly useful. But in Keats's line it throws the mood completely out of kilter, sets up a feeling which cannot be harmonized with the rest of the figure.

This observation leads me to comment upon the famous stanza as a whole. Fine as it is, it is guilty, within itself, of the same faulty shift in mood which the word "desolate" accomplishes when it is substituted for "perilous."

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

*No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard*

*In ancient days by emperor and clown;
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path*

*Through the sad heart of Ruth, when,
Sick for home,*

*She stood in tears amid the alien corn:
The same that oft-times hath*

Charmed magic casements opening on the foam

Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

Until the introduction of the final figure, the nightingale's voice has been spoken of as something compelling and exquisite, which moves the eternal human being in an almost religious way. The lines about Ruth are supreme. They intensify the feeling of humanity in a particular example which could not have been better chosen. But when we are impelled to change the key, to dismiss the human for the supernatural. The "magic casements" are, after all, a bit of elegant stuffing. True, they are intended, perhaps, to suggest that the nightingale's power is unearthly. But since the whole poem is an expression of the nightingale's effect on a very human Keats, the suggestion of unearthly power through its effect on something not-human, rather than through its own fine mystery to human beings, seems to me a false shift. But perhaps I am unduly exacting.

MARGARET PATTERSON.

Berkeley, California.

Description

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

Beautiful and glowing description, such as ornamented Longfellow's "Evangeline," has almost disappeared from our fiction today, according to a leading article in a recent issue of *The Saturday Review*. Permit me to take exception. Surely the writer of the article must have been confining his recent reading to psychological novels. But were he a student of our more popular literature, he might revise his estimate. The novels of Zane Grey fairly overflow with vivid word-pictures of the scenery of the southwest, and there are many of his readers who consider the descriptive passages the best portions of his books; I'm one of them, for I never cared for his plots, and I always found his sentiment strained. Take another instance. James Oliver Curwood revels in description for description's sake, painting the scenery of western Canada, until the impression of Canada I have gained from a perusal of his books is one of a vast, trackless wilderness of mountains, ravines, morasses, and plains, inhabited by timber wolves and other species of wild game, with an occasional escaped criminal hotly pursued by Northwestern mounted police. He certainly puts all the emphasis on the natural environment. And then there is Stewart Edward White, another nature lover, painting pictures of sunny Cali-

fornia or of darkest Africa as the mood seizes him. His latest novel, "Back of Beyond," is a complete travelogue, and (by the way) the best story I have read in the past year.

All of the above writers are producing novels that sell by the ten thousand. I might give other instances, but the above seem to prove that the Englishman is not the only one who glorifies nature in his literature. We do pretty well in America, too.

ROGER SPRAGUE.

Imola, Calif.

French Slang

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

Let joy prevail that someone has thrown a book of French slang into the literary arena. While American slang interests us because of its quaint lack of meaning, French slang often shows an imagination which furnishes perpetually renewable laughter. And let us not omit mention of that compendium of alphabetized humor, "Parisismen," published by the Langenscheidt dictionary-producers in Berlin. My "dritte durch einen Anhang vermehrte Auflage" is dated 1890. Its author is Césaire Villatte. It bears the motto, quoted from Dumas fils: "Il ne faut pas confondre notre langue Parisienne avec la Langue Française."

LEO RICH LEWIS.

Tufts College.

Where Credit is Due

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

The author of "Qwertuiop" (from internal evidence he can be identified as our old friend Etaoin Shrdlu) is diligent in the endeavor to distribute credit and discredit where they are due; but he does not go back quite far enough. I am not sure whether what may be called, to save argument and avoid acrimonious definition, the New Movement in Literature began in this country about 1912, or whether it is only that I (and the author of "Qwertuiop") began to sit up and take notice about that time. But, accepting the date, there was a Great Forerunner some three years earlier, a voice crying in the wilderness (if Mr. Lorimer's weekly may properly be so described)—Mrs. Corra Harris.

Mrs. Harris said all she had to say in her earlier novels, and since then has been saying only what others had already said; but this should not obscure the fact that in such books as "Eve's Second Husband" she was actually the pioneer of the New Realism. She was old-fashioned enough to take the mechanics of physiology as matters of such general knowledge that they did not need to be injected into literature; but her ideas were, for that time, quite appallingly subversive; I can well remember grave arguments as to whether a pure young girl (they were quite shameless about admitting it, in those days) should be allowed to read the *Saturday Evening Post* where such immoral doctrines were disseminated. You may believe in realism or not, but you cannot deny that Mrs. Harris gave several million people their first dose of it—and it was an extremely veristic and acrid realism, at that.

Surely the P. E. N. Club ought to give her an inscribed bronze plaque, or something.

ELMER DAVIS.

New York.

Capital and Capitalism

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

Mr. Nock's criticism of the terms "capital" and "capitalism" in his review of "The Rise of American Civilization" shows that he like, I believe, ninety-nine per cent of our citizens does not recognize the irreconcilable and unbridgeable difference in the content of these terms.

Capitalism bears exactly the same relation to capital that a cancer does to an otherwise sound organism.

Capital, as even Macaulay's schoolboy should know, is the sum in currency which it would take, in labor and material and land, to replace a plant or railroad.

Capitalism, on the other hand, as applied to that plant or enterprise is the amount in shares and bonds which have been issued against said labor and materials.

I believe I am conservative in estimating that capitalism has put a burden on the people of the United States fifty times greater than the amount of capital really employed. Like the cancerous growth it is absorbing the energy of the people for the

benefit not of the owners of real capital but of the financial exploiters whose sole business is to secure control of honestly capitalized undertakings and then issue reams of nicely printed coupons.

Mr. Nock, again like almost everyone, is unaware that this fungus growth, Capitalism, is less than 50 years old.

Those arch-thieves, Fisk and Gould, started the game with the Erie, and though of course it would be unparliamentary to apply such an opprobrious term to our living captains of finance, their procedure, stripped of technicalities, is precisely the same.

The bond swindle is another phase of capitalism and of even more recent introduction, but it has already attained almost inconceivable dimensions.

Even the few of us who know what a bond is are too engrossed in our own work to attach any significance whatever to the fact that year after year, the bond offerings on the New York Exchange alone are over two hundred million dollars each month.

Now that aviation is going to do for railroads what the railroads did to the canals, the time is at hand when from Wall Street insidious propaganda in favor of National ownership will issue; and then, and apparently only then, the citizens will realize the stupendous vested interests which Capitalism has evolved. Doctor and Mrs. Beard are as right in their use of these terms as in every other part of their great history.

BENJAMIN MACMAHON.

New York.

Julien Green Again

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

Today, as I received your issue of July 9, I received also a copy of *French Books Month by Month*, May-June, 1927, in which I find a short article signed Julien Green. "How I Wrote My First Novel" (pp. 71-73). One passage may settle the case between Mr. B. Fay and Mr. Lawrence Lee regarding the debt of Julien Green to the University of Virginia.

Here is the passage:

"As I look back on the time I spent at the University of Virginia, it seems to me that the hours of almost intolerable homesickness and boredom I had to go through have faded from my mind; I can remember only good things and those with a feeling of keen regret: the beauty of the grounds and buildings, the hills, the quiet southern town. I was not studying for a degree and was in consequence allowed to work pretty much as I chose. Let me hasten to say that the studying I did never amounted to much, but countless are the hours I spent at the Library. There indeed I forgot Paris. My tastes ran along so many lines that I should certainly have been at a loss to say what I didn't like and I read almost anything that came my way, provided it was written in French or English and did not deal with mathematics. It was at the Library I wrote my first story, but I am not proud of it and comfort myself with the thought that, though printed, it was read by few and soon forgotten. Yet it spurred me on. I had hitherto never been able to finish a piece of writing and the fact that I had actually finished a story encouraged me so much that I began to think of writing a novel.

"Part of the summer holidays I spent in Savannah. In August I usually went to Virginia, where I stayed at my uncle's home in Fauquier County. *Kinloch* is the name of the house and I could never see the gaunt old place without thinking what an admirable setting it would make for a story.

ALBERT SCHINZ.

Paul Bourget's latest novel, "Nos Actes Nous Suivent" (Paris: Plon) employs that theme so popular in present-day fiction—that of the man who shuffles off one identity and assumes another. Its hero, George Fresneley, has joined the Commune, bringing with him the secret of a terrific explosive. The regular troops are terrified by the knowledge of its existence, and a violent reaction against the Communists sets in. Fresneley ventures out one night in disguise to find a group of bourgeois lynching a young man under the impression that it is himself, the inventor of the dynamite. He is paralyzed by horror, and does nothing to prevent the assassination. Not long after he escapes to the United States, there marries, has children, and builds up a successful career. But as he nears the end of his life he is again overwhelmed by the crime that had so disturbed his youth, and the fact that he has not redeemed his responsibilities to the heir of the man who was murdered. The second part of the book is taken up with his son's reparation of the wrong.

On the Air

A DIGEST of the following ten articles chosen by a Council of Librarians, a outstanding contributions to the July periodicals, was recently broadcast under the auspices of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, by Station WOR:

ENGLAND'S QUARREL WITH RUSSIA.—Frank H. Simonds in *Review of Reviews*.

Great Britain severs relations with Russia, failing in the attempt to be friendly and charging political conspiracy by commercial agents. The author believes that the consequences of this episode will dominate European history for a long time to come.

THE MISSISSIPPI FLOOD—AND BUSINESS.—Lawrence A. Downs in *System*.

The business aspects of the flood are here summed up. The author, because of his company perhaps more than any other has been forced to recognize and study the vagaries of the river, is in a position to analyze its significance.

POLITE TRAVEL IN THE THIRTIES.—From the Diary of Mrs. George Ticknor in *Atlantic Monthly*.

The interesting diary by Mrs. George Ticknor is most interesting at this time in view of the thousands of American tourists and a good portion of the American Legion who are visiting European shores this summer.

THE HUNTINGTON LIBRARY AND ART GALLERY.—George Ellery Hale in *Scribner's*.

The author relates the story of this great boon to American scholarship. He tells how the treasures were acquired and how they will be utilized in the study of Anglo-American civilization.

THE FARM PROBLEM STATED.—Frank O. Lowden in *Review of Reviews*.

At the moment when the former Governor of Illinois is being put forward as a presidential candidate by important elements in the great agricultural states of the Middle West, he presents here the farmer's problem and proposes a remedy.

WHAT HAPPENED AT NANKING.—Alice Tisdale Hobart in *Harper's Magazine*.

A first-hand account of the thrilling events last spring when the American residents at Nanking gathered on Socony Hill and escaped from the attacking Cantonese Army. The author wrote at the time in informal letters to her family the story of American danger and heroism.

THE BEHAVIORIST LOOKS AT INSTINCTS.—John B. Watson in *Harper's Magazine*.

The author, whose books on behaviorism may be called the gospel of this new philosophy, explains why the behaviorist does not believe that the human being has instincts, but conditioned visual responses.

A FLIGHT TO THE UNKNOWN.—Tom Gil in *Scribner's*.

Combining the qualities of aviator and forester, the author fell into mysterious adventure. He tells in an interesting fashion of his expedition under sealed orders to prospect for Mexican mahogan in a cranky seaplane.

THE SUBMARINE.—Arthur H. Pollen in *Foreign Affairs*.

The eminent British naval authority slashes at "the submarine myth," alleging that it was a failure in the war against convoyed vessels and that only the incompetence or lack of courage of naval men prevents their informing the public of the fact.

IF I WERE A CHINAMAN.—George A. Doisey in *Cosmopolitan*.

The man who wrote "Why We Behave Like Human Beings" reveals our part in China's affairs, which he criticizes as not too admirable, and shows why China might hate us with no little bitterness.

literature.

Under the editorship of Maurice Wiemotte, Professor at the University of Liège and formerly President of the Académie Royale des Lettres Belges, the Renaissance due Livre is about to publish a series of books designed to give a view of Belgium.

Bobby Jones, in collaboration with O. Keeler, has also burst into autobiography. His "Down the Fairway" will be out soon now through Minton, Balch & Company. It is the story of his golf life. Keeler sports writer of the *Atlanta Journal*, an old friend of Jones. Jones analyzes his own method of play. The book will be illustrated with over fifty photographs.

Robert A. Simon, author of "Brother Ballads" is not a member of the firm Simon and Schuster. He is in a music concert management business, affiliated with Arthur Judson. He has written two novels "Our Little Girl" and "The Week-End Mystery." He is also the translator "Fraulein Else." He writes for the musical review section of the *New Yorker* each week. . . .