Foreign Literature

American Fiction

LE ROMAN AMÉRICAIN D'AUJOURD-HUI. By RÉGIS MICHAUD. Paris: Boivin et Cie. 1927.

Reviewed by ARTHUR W. COLTON

I N a recent article on M. André Siegfried's "America Comes of Age" a reviewer remarked that "an American writing of his own country would unconsciously minimize the one characteristic which looms largest in M. Siegfried's more detached field of vision. The American sees unity. We conceive ourselves to be a nation. To M. Siegfried we are a strange and wonderful conglomeration of diverse races trying to be a nation."

That M. Siegfried sees this diversity is all to his credit, and indeed he seems to be a more discriminating writer than his critic. For-quite to the contrary-Americans, like the natives of any country, tend to see diversity among themselves, and it is the visitors who tend to see unity, or uniformity. The natives are much nearer the truth, particularly in respect to America. The subject is complex but it is probable that the uniformity is more superficial than the diversity. At any rate it lands all thinking in a futile mess to say "unity" when you probably mean "uniformity," or to say "nation" in such a way that nobody knows whether it means something political or something social. Most Germans are not bawling drill sergeants or fusty professors. Most Englishmen are not like John Bull, and never were. Most Americans are neither "puritans," nor Babbitts, nor money mad millionaires. The habit of visualizing a nation, or any group, as a person, is the old myth-making faculty and habit, vital to art and poisonous to fact. There is no Germany, or England, or America, which thinks or acts thus and so. There are only enough persons who do something of the kind, sufficiently similar and sufficiently noticeable to attract attention. There need not be, relatively, very many.

All this is apart from M. Michaud on the American novel, except to note that there seem to be some exceptions to the general rule that books on America by Europeans are not worth reading by Americans; and except that M. Michaud's commentary is all built around a thesis.

He is a Professor of French in the University of California, but all his books seem to be on American literature, most of them on Emerson. · A French critic may be as inadequate on English poetry as one of our critics on French poetry, but the best foreign critics of English literature in general are usually French, and M. Michaud on the American novel is not only competent but up-to-date. The four novelists of today whom he selects for his main analysis are Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, and Cabell; and probably the selection is sound. The novelists of the past selected as leading up to these are Hawthorne, James, Howells, and Mrs. Wharton. The last is both past and present, and M. Michaud perhaps, takes her somewhat too seriously.

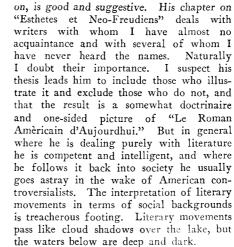
He is hardly to be blamed for the thesis or doctrine, so familiar now to us all and which demands the intensive, incessant, and

indeterminate use of the word "puritan." He only echoes our current criticism. If we could but drop psychoanalysis for a while, and especially its terms as literary terminology, and do a little analysis of words! Psychoanalytic terms have reached the status of a common slang, portmanteau words ranging all over the area of a mood. "Complex" is as invertebrate as an octopus. We say "inhibition" meaning what our fathers meant by "reserve" or "scruple." They had a theory, about it, which we have exchanged for another theory, and our theory is riding us as tyrannically as theirs. Dr. Freud has replaced Dr. Calvin and that Doctor Angelicus, Thomas Aquinas, and reversed their values. Instead of its being dangerous and probably wrong to follow one's impulses, it becomes dangerous and probably wrong not to do so. In short we are engaged in denving "the puritan" and all his works, whatever we may mean by "the puritan." Historically perhaps we should mean an extreme protestant in England or America, abstractly perhaps anyone who thinks conduct is nine-tenths of life. But Dr. Canby, recently in The Saturday Review, implied that Cooper was no puritan because he disliked Yankees, his own ancestry being Quaker. Evidently Quakers were not puritans, and "Yankees" were. More than a third of the old churches in Charleston were Presbyterian, but as no one vet has said "puritan Charleston" it must be that Presbyterians are not puritans either. The reading of the young is more severely Bowdlerized in Latin countries than here. Twelfth century in Europe piety had a much greater horror of "sex" than nineteenth century piety in America, and the Catholic clergy seem to be stiffer than the Protestant in the matter of feminine nudity.

Anyhow, the Mayflower passengers were puritans. But the bulk of the immigrants who poured into New England for two hundred years thereafter did not come escaping from religious persecution, but to own land and improve their fortunes, and how many of them thought conduct ninetenths of life nobody knows. Early in the seventeenth century one Malvolio was denounced as a "puritan" who thought that because of his virtues there should be no more cakes and ale. That is a definition It seems with some appealing points. almost to include prohibitionists.

At any rate, if one looks at things in place of words, most of the "things" that so much of our twentieth century literature denounces as puritan are much the same things that used to be denounced as "Philistine" or "bourgeois," and in England now sometimes as "Victorian"-old fashioned proprieties, taboos, conventions, ideas, assumptions, as they appear to a generation quite a little "fed up" with quite a number of them. I am only suggesting that the vocabulary of this revolt against conventions is becoming fearsomely conventional, and some of us are getting quite a little "fed up" with hearing the dubious rather crassly assumed to be the obvious. The fanatic is always with us and is usually in some kind of revolt.

To return again to M. Michaud, his analysis of Dreiser, Lewis, Anderson, Cabell, Hergesheimer, Miss Cather, and so



It is probably untrue that anything that could properly be called "puritan" ever was-it certainly is not now the "dominant strain" in American life. Successive waves of miscellaneous Europeans have been pouring across a continent, practically empty before them, for three hundred years. What they were, what they have experienced, how they have reacted to it and to each other,-the large features of the phenomena-are the main causes and the best indications. The frontier or the empty continent has probably had far more to do with individualism than incidental religions. The extraordinary experience, the types it developed, and the reactions against those types, these if anything, are the "dominant" things. A wilderness may stimulate control as well as liberty. Too much regulation may represent an effort to bring some order out of too much miscellany. You cannot represent such a social history by a set of catchwords.

Our literary mood is showing a tendency to shift from self-complacency to selfcriticism, and the shift is welcome enough. But after all disillusion is but a name for a different outfit of illusions, and literary critics should make an effort to keep their feet under them.

M. Michaud's book however is one of those exceptional books, by a European but worth reading by an American, because of Frenchman's native instinct for the intelligent literary criticism.

The Eternal Quest

GABRIEL MAURIÈRE: L'Homme Qui ne Meurt Pas. Paris: Editions de la Vraie France. 1927.

Reviewed by AMELIA V. ENDE

 $F_{in the loss of it}^{ROM}$ those remote times that live only in the lore of the people and the songs of the poets, to the present, when every simple desire of the human heart is made the subject of serious scientific research, we have an endless record of the eternal quest for means to prolong youth and arrest the ravages of age. Across Bifrost, the rainbow, did the gods ride from heaven to the well of Urd, at the foot of Ygdrasil, for a drink of its rejuvenating water. Fierce was their pursuit of the giant who kidnapped Idun, the keeper of the youthrestoring apples. When they began to feel indifferent and inert, a sip from Odhrarir inspired them with youthful zest and enthusiasm.

The story can be traced through the mythology of many nations and through history, from Roger Bacon, the learned monk, to Ponce de Leon, the romantic explorer, and beyond to the Metchnikoffs, Steinachs, and other seekers through whom science continues the old quest. The problem has not been neglected by poets. We owe to it the figure of Faust. Now a French novelist, Gabriel Maurière, has created the character of an old scientist, whose ambition is to discover the secret of longevity, if not immortality. hotel of the Quai Bourbon, Olivier Sandreau is engaged in experiments to find a substance which would renew the waning life-force, and is greatly irritated by the visit of Paul Rabardy, a reporter for Le Mondial, but succeeds in throwing him off the track. Some years before, Sandreau had traveled in Asia and brought home a little girl and her nurse, natives of India, whose kin had been slaughtered in an altercation with Chinese. One day he finds in his apartment a bit of parchment with these words in Sanskrit: On the Blue Peak, under the eyes of Buddha, the tower blossomed. The Immortals send you the Kalari from the fifth terrace. . The sage who partakes of the seed of the tree of life, lives one thousand years. . .

which on examination he finds richer in vitamines than any substance known to him. He promptly associates them with the seed spoken of in the parchment, and tells the women to prepare for a journey to Asia. Arucha makes a farewell call upon Madame Cabibol, whose husband is a rival of Sandreau, in order to meet her sweetheart, the reporter, who promptly plans to meet her in Asia.

Thus reads the introduction to the fascinating record of adventure and mystery, which the author has invested with all the exotic charm of the Tibetan landscape and the tantalizing elusiveness of Buddhist sainthood. Through his guardianship of Arucha, who to the natives is known as Princess Kara-Vitse, Sandreau obtains admission to the Blue Peak with its five terraces. He represents himself as an Occidental seeker for truth, and the reaction of the Hindu sages squatting in silent meditation on the terraces, is hardly different from that of the young Messiah who recently visited America. They tell him that the West, in bondage to war and evil, is far from truth, and that only love and renunciation can insure peace. Finally Sandreau canont restrain himself from saying what is foremost in his mind; he asks:

"Can man be immortal? Venerable master, have you the secret?"

whereupon the interview is brusquely terminated. But when a saint of a higher order receives him, before Sandreau has spoken a word, he is told:

If you would live forever, tear out of your heart the love of self and the pride to dominate men by your science. Embrace the whole world in a sentiment of peace.

As he is led from terrace to terrace, the sages assume a more and more taciturn attitude. One has for him but one word: "Love!" and with the Master, the Buddha incarnate, Sandreau is allowed to communicate only in silence through the medium of a cord, which the mummy-like form holds in his hand, while Sandreau applies it to his brow! But, before the interpreter returns to lead him away, Sandreau has caught sight of the fifth terrace, separated from the others by a wide ditch, alive with monstrous serpents, and in the gruesome depths has spied plants with a metallic bluish lustre, like the fragments of seed secreted in his wallet. How the reporter who to his dismay has joined the expedition, secures for him the coveted plant, but under duress wins from him the hand of Arucha, whom he had expected to wed after his rejuvenation, furnishes the dramatic climax of the Tibetan adventure.

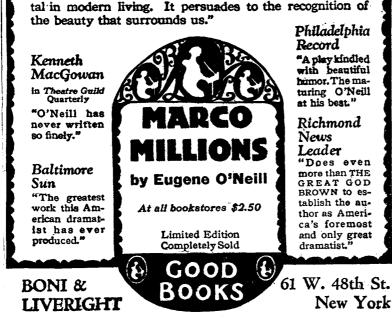
The third and last book of the novel forecasts events which some time between 1940 and 1960 may happen in Europe and shake the foundations of the Western world even more deeply than did the World War of 1914-18. The magic berries of the Tibetan jungle have marvelously rejuvenated Sandreau. He has renounced love and pursues his secondary goal: superhuman power. He had been disappointed in his dream of founding a "divine dynasty." He is disgusted with the vulgarity and vileness of the period in which he is living and men like Paul Rabardy are hauling in rich dividends.

Money, ambition, all tyrannies more or less disguised in a civilization from which liberty was gradually disappearing under the reign of the most daring and the most cruel, were ruling the world. Power alone, a supreme power could conquer them. . . And after that con-quest would come thy reign, sublime, Gautama, and Thy kingdom of love-Jesus!

Science had made the previous war a horror never to be forgotten and science was to make all war impossible in the future. From a formidable fortress in a Swiss mountain, in which he has installed a prodigious electro-magnetic plant, Sandreau sends forth his power. He is the unknown deus ex machina behind the stage of the new world tragedy. Thus he plays the rôle long before chosen for himself, that of le dieu terrestre. On the background of these varied and stirring scenes, Gabriel Maurière has clearly and firmly limned a series of remarkable portraits: Sandreau, the thinker and scientist who supplants in his heart the desire for love by the lust for power; Arucha, the "Hindu kitten," who lives the life of a typical Parisienne, but in her heart longs for Asia; the clever, unscrupulous climber Paul Rabardy, a type too numerous in our materialistic age to need further comment; Weisskrone, the financier, who succeeds in serving his own country and its enemy; Stany, the incorrigible idealist, and others. He has ably welded fact and fancy, science and speculation.



contributes to a clearer understanding of truths fundamen-



The girl admits that she has used the parchment for curl papers, and brings him the box in which the nurse had carried it during their flight from India. Sandreau discovers in it fragments of a peculiar seed,

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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.

Belles Lettres

READINGS. Selected by WALTER DE LA MARE and THOMAS QUAYLE. Knopf. 1927. \$5.

This is a companion volume to Mr. de la Mare's incomparable anthology, "Come Hither." The size and cover-lettering are the same. The cloth of the cover is of a different kind and color. The book is not as unusual as "Come Hither," but it is a notable collection. The woodcut illustrations by C. T. Nightingale enhance its charm. Here are a great variety of old tales and selections from varied authors old and new, from Roger Ascham to A. A. Milne. Swift, Defoe, Dickens, Pepys, Marryat, Stevenson, Hakluyt, Cowper, Hardy, Thomas Bewick, George Eliot,-the famous names crowd thick as plums, and there are plenty of others. A veritable plum-pudding of great prose, a liberal education for a child and a reminiscent delight for an oldster! We have Jane Austen and we have Katherine Mansfield. We have Trelawney and Joseph Conrad, Robert Southey and Herman Melville. The introduction is an admirable word to young readers, and the keynote of it is, "Make your own discoveries. Explore!" De la Mare is a great explorer of literature, with a wonderful natural taste and a ripe discrimination.

Biography

- THE SECRETS OF A SAVOYARD. By Henry A. Lytton. Doran. \$2.50 net.
- STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS. By P. T. Barnum. Edited by George S. Bryan. Knopf. 2 vols. \$10 net.

Economics

- HARMONY BETWEEN LABOR AND CAPITAL. By Oscar Newfang. Putnam. \$2. Business Without A Buyer.
- By William Trufant Foster and Waddill Catchings. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.
- CAPITAL FOR LABOR. By W. Francis Lloyd and Bertram Austin. Dodd, Mead. \$1.25. Business Cycles and Business Measurements.
- By Carl Snyder. Macmillan. \$6. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM. By
- A. S. Sachs. New York: Vanguard Press. 50c.

Education

- MODERN ESSAYS OF VARIOUS TYPES. Edited by Charles A. Cockayne. New York: Merrill. WORKSHOP TRAINING FOR JUNIORS. By Josephine L. Baldwin. Methodist Book Concern.
- \$I. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. By David Saville Muzzey. Ginn.

Fiction

LUKUNDOO AND OTHER STORIES. By EDWARD LUCAS WHITE. Doran. 1927. \$2.50.

When Edward Lucas White dreamed his remarkable tale about Andivius Hedulio one felt as if such a dreamer ought to be allowed to remain awake just long enough to record his dreams and then be forcibly put to sleep again. "Lukundoo," however, makes one doubt whether, for the sake of the author himself, one ought to demand such a sacrifice. For, according to Mr. White, eight of these ten stories were not composed but dreamed and most of them are, as he says, paragon nightmares.

This does not mean that they do not give the impression of actuality which is so important in the narration of weird tales. They do. The most gruesome and horrible of them are all related in the dry, impersonal, and matter-of-fact manner best calculated to heighten their credibility. They run the gamut of imponderables, from second sight to ghouls and nameless monstrosities, they are staged in Africa, Norway, Rio de Janeiro, as well as in such proximate regions as Baltimore, but the reader is always led into the unknown from solid platforms of every-day experiences. All this means that Mr. White has written stories that are at once competent and entertaining. As thrillers, however, they seem to one reader to lack the magical touch of the great experts in this field. It is perhaps unfair to compare the initial tale with H. G. Wells's "Pollock and the Porroh Man" since Mr. White himself calls the latter a much better story. And one hesi-tates to mention the name of Poe, the master of them all. But if, for instance, such excellent examples of the type as "The Duke of Portland" by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam or Mrs. Wharton's "The Young

Gentlemen" are read after Mr. White's "The Snout"-all three tales somewhat similar in theme-one cannot but feel that in "The Snout" the unexpected and the horrible are not quite unexpected and horrible enough. And this is characteristic of even the best of the stories in "Lukundoo." They seem a little spare and meagre, a little under-realized for all the ease of their telling and for all the imagination that went into their concocting.

EAST INDIA AND COMPANY. By PAUL MORAND. A. & C. Boni. 1927. \$2.50.

The jacket of this book promises the reader "bizarre oriental adventures with the utmost ultra-modern European spices." There is nothing in it that can be called "spicy," as that adjective is usually applied to French novels. Indeed, it is in the class of innocuous novels of which the French publishers say, peut être mis entre toutes les mains.

"Bizarre oriental adventures," however, we find, and in good measure. Three ghost stories and four other corking good yarns for which China furnishes a brilliantly sketched background, a gruesome chapter on Malay poisons, stories in which a Spaniard lives as a god on a mysterious island in the Indian Ocean, a Parisian finds the haunted skull of the horse of Ghengis Khan, an Englishman is tricked by a cunning Oriental in the Kingdom of Indrapura, an American girl in Manila is unable to love anyone but herself, two Scotsmen of the same family, but a hundred and fifty years apart, feel the fascinating lure of Tahiti,-these clever and cosmopolitan tales should appeal to readers of all nationalities and all tastes.

Paul Morand, already widely known as the talented author of "Open All Night" and "Closed All Night," ranks with Claude Farrère as the contemporary master in France of the exotic tale. Neither Morand nor Farrère can vie with Pierre Loti in ability to reproduce the soul of foreign lands; but both make an equal, if not superior, appeal to the general reader, for they have what Loti lacked: an art of composition, a sense of the dramatic, in a word, excellent narrative technique.

The English of the translation is so good that, with rare exceptions, one is not aware that he is reading a translation. It is a pity that the translator's name is not on the title-page, for he deserves to be known and complimented.

THE LOST ADVENTURER. By WAL-TER GILKYSON. Scribners. 1927. \$2.

This is the story of Rann McCloud, young proprietor of a Pennsylvania newspaper in the 'sixties, who championed the cause of the humble Ellises, lost his paper and his home in the resultant libel suit, married Isabel d'Alvarez, went with her to live in her Uncle Policarpo's Altean castle, became a major in the Spanish army, was jailed for Republican beliefs, escaped, was recaptured and ordered deported, and drowned while swimming ashore to see Isabel, who meanwhile and without his knowledge was traveling to join him aboard ship.

The book's plan is ironical. Its execution is not. The result is confusing. Rann McCloud is not adventurous. He is a sullen young man of no great intelligence. His interests, like his hatreds, are picavune. Had he accomplished all the few things he attempted he still would have been a man of no importance. The greatest

usual profusion, is represented. The authors range from Mr. A. Aharonian (Armenia) to Mr. K. Zarins (Latvia) with a great many new and picturesque cognomens in between, and by those interested in the literary welfare of the old world, a number of instructive comparisons may doubtless be drawn. As pure reading matter, however, it must be admitted that the whole volume is a trifle unsatisfying. A copious bibliography and directory of European periodicals is included. Incidentally, there are also several first rate pieces of work, which may be picked out of the welter of nationalism by any discriminating reader.

Most of the "Georgian Stories" for last year are already old friends. Messrs. Huxley, Bullett, Coppard, Maugham, Moss, and O'Flaherty all were fortunate enough to find publishers and readers for the stories by which they are here represented prior to the appearance of this collection. They are all good stories in one way or another, and they are indicative of a far greater number of equally readable tales by the same men. The book may therefore serve as propaganda, or merely as an innocuous way of sampling the vintage of 1926 without investing heavily therein, according as the purchaser desires. Quarreling with the selection is futile in any year, and in this one particularly so. We are offered everything from the politely academic (Miss Sandra Alexander's "The Van Zandt Dinner") to Miss Gertrude Stein's admirably sententious "Fifteenth of November." In spite of the wide latitude of styles and tastes, no one story seems more than good. But perhaps that is the fault of the Georgian short story itself rather than of its editors.

GERVAISE OF THE GARDEN. By EDITH BALLINGER PRICE. Century. 1927. \$1.50.

In this book romantically inclined little girls will find plenty of plot and one of those improbable tales of a lost little girl, living in a ruined castle with a miserly grandfather. She is later restored to her mother by the efforts of three enterprising playmates from the city. It is exactly the sort of story that healthy girls of ten and twelve, leading normal, carefully-supervised lives will read from cover to cover many times, sympathising with the neglected heroine and perhaps envying her a little! It isn't a particularly unusual book in any way, but it has a vigor and spirit of its own and is readable, which is more than can be said of many juveniles of this type. Perhaps the author will sometime turn this ability of hers into something of more lasting account,-a modern "Little Women" or a trifle less artificial tale of present-day girls.

THE MAGIC FORMULA. By L. P.

JACKS. Harpers. 1927. \$2.50. The stories of Mr. L. P. Jacks, of which this volume contains twelve selected from a larger series, are good enough to give their

author standing as a writer of short stories; but they are not good enough to keep people from thinking of him as the invariably "distinguished editor of the Hibbert Journal." They are pleasantly told things, nicely ironical, wooden now and then, tinctured generally with the antiintellectualism of an intellectual. They rest on an amused puzzlement over things at large; and while that state is not one from which vigorous writing comes, it can produce a diverting sort nevertheless. Of that sort is "A Gravedigger Scene," with its burying plot so full that "yer puts in one, and yer digs up two;" and "Made Out of Nothing," the story of the honest faker of idols, Egyptian mummies, Tanagra figurines, and what-not, whose motto was, "As good as the originals; and, if anything, better."

THE LINGERING FAUN. By MABEL WOOD MARTIN. Stokes. 1927. \$2.

In these pages the problems of the Russian aristocracy exiled in Paris after the war come to us with a certain vividness and power. But what comprehension we get is the result of hard labor, for "The Lingering Faun" is a very difficult novel to follow. Mabel Wood Martin writes diffusely and with a kind of grandiose emotionalism; as a result the narrative for chapters at a stretch appears hopelessly confused. Indeed, there will be comparatively few readers with the perseverance to plough through the first hundred pages. The book once finished, however, we find sympathy for these poor outcasts, and we pity them deeply. Here is first-class material for a novel badly mutilated by inexpertness and lack of perspective, material so good that in spite of the fiasco of its presentation we are genuinely moved to compassion.

THE CROOKED STICK. By Pauline Stiles. Doran. \$2 net.

A VIRGIN OF YESTERDAY. By Dorothy Speare. Doran. \$2 net.

- ONE OF THESE DAYS. By Michael Trappes-Lomax. Doran. \$2.50 net.
- THE RECOLLECTIONS OF RODERIC FYFE. By John Oxenham. Longmans, Green. \$2.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT. By Carolyn Wells. Doran. \$2 net.

THE MAN THEY COULDN'T ARREST. By Austin J. Small. Doran. \$2 net.

SECURITY. By Esmé Wynne-Tyson. Doran. \$2 net.

O'FLAHERTY THE GREAT. By John Cournos. Knopf. \$2.50.

A SHADOWY THIRD. By Elizabeth Sprigge. Knopf.

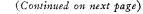
THE INGENIOUS HIDALGO. Miguel Cervantes. By Han Ryner. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.75.

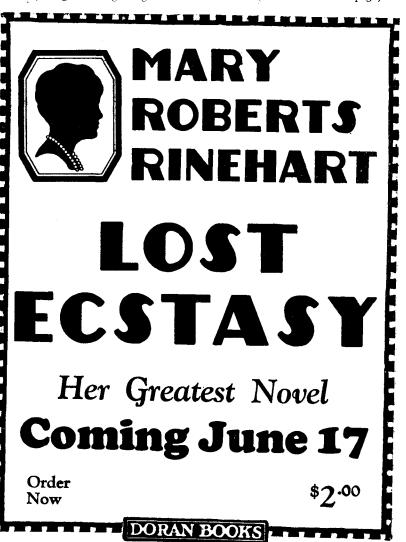
THREE LIGHTS FROM A MATCH. By Leonard Nason. Doran. \$2.

Young MEN IN LOVE. By Michael Arlen. Doran. \$2.50.

Foreign

GOLDONI. By H. C. Chatfield-Taylor. Bari: Laterza & Figli.





height he can achieve is an exhibition of that senseless obstinacy which is the courage of the very weak.

Mr. Gilkyson seems to take this oaf seriously, to consider him an admirable figure. To himself Rann McCloud seems a giant. To his wife he seems a giant. That's all very well. But when Mr. Gilkyson agreed with them he spoiled his book.

THE BEST CONTINENTAL SHORT STORIES OF 1925-26. Dodd, Mead. 1927. \$2.50.

GEORGIAN STORIES. 1926. Putnam. 1927. \$2.50.

The first of these two collections contains short stories which have appeared during the past year in the leading periodicals of Continental Europe, except France. The editor, Mr. Richard Eaton, seems to have sought for variety rather than uniform excellence. Every nation from Spain to India, including the Scandinavian in un-

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