

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*.

CLUBS in Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri ask for a choice of new novels to review. At this writing my admiration is centered upon "Gallions Reach," by H. M. Tomlinson (Harper); "Death Comes for the Archbishop," by Willa Cather (Knopf); "Dusty Answer," a pathetically young and wide-eyed novel by Rosamund Lehmann (Holt) that somehow keeps troubling after it is read; "The Love-Child," a psychological fantasy by Edith Olivier (Viking), and Mr. Wells's "Meanwhile" (Doran). I have had a great time with Margaret Irwin's new story "Knock Four Times" (Harcourt, Brace), not only because I happen to have some slight acquaintance with Redcliffe Road, the "Rainbow Road" of the story, a locality so much like our own Greenwich Village that it scarce seems to be in London. This story concerns an author who may have been Michael Arlen; anyway, he must have given her the starting point for him, and the tale is one that keeps you reading. Also I have followed with amazement and amusement the political novel "God Got One Vote," by Frederick Brennan (Simon & Schuster); it is a city boss's life-story, cheerful and matter-of-fact, up-to-date and unperturbed.

I have told at least ten widely scattered study clubs by mail that the most important non-fiction book for them to study at present is in my opinion André Siegfried's "America Comes of Age" (Harcourt, Brace), and that if they will take it by sections and illustrate with contemporary novels they will have an unusual and certainly provocative season. Beard's "Rise of American Civilization" (Macmillan) should also be on such a reading-list, and somewhere along the line should be found "The Art of Thought," by Graham Wallas (Harcourt, Brace), for this book opens the eyes to the fact that we have gained more control over things and less over our own reasoning processes than ever in the history of mankind.

C. C. M., New York, asks for books on the appreciation of works of art, for a beginner who is not a child.

"HOW to Study Pictures," by J. Littlejohns, R. B. A. (Macmillan), is one of the beautiful illustrated books for which the house of A. & C. Black is famous; it selects eight celebrated paintings in the National Gallery, the Louvre, and the Prado, reproduces them in colors, large enough to give an excellent idea of their appearance, and discusses them as if standing before them in the gallery, making little sketches now and then—over forty in all—to bring out special points. This book impresses me as most apt to give a beginner a taste for going further in an appreciation of technical points, without being itself in technical terms. "The Approach to Painting," by Thomas Bodkin (Harcourt, Brace), a trustee of the National Gallery of Ireland, might be used by those who so often ask me for books "to take the place of a college education"—not that this is a college text, but it approaches the subject in that spirit. It gives you, indeed, your choice of several methods of approach, according to temperament: philosophical, analytical, technical, casual, or by siege. This is followed by discussions of twenty famous pictures from Giotto to Manet, entertainingly described and shown in photograph. "Landmarks in Nineteenth Century Painting," by Clive Bell (Harcourt, Brace), goes on from where this leaves off, at least with little overlap, for it ranges from David to Cézanne—the student can go on from here with Mr. Bell's earlier work, "Since Cézanne" (Harcourt, Brace). One accustomed to the brilliant flings at mediocrity that diversify the opinions of this critic, will find them in this volume, but somewhat gentler; he may rout the Pre-Raphaelites, for instance, but he grants them the honors of war. Indeed, his highest bounces are when he steps on a subject off his path, such as the legitimacy of Louis Napoleon or the reminiscences of George Moore. This book too has pictures. There is a new book by Bell's opponent, R. H. Wilenski, "The Modern Movement in Art" (Stokes), which will help make it clear to one brought up in the old school. Whatever beginning book you choose, get "Art Through the Ages," by Helen Gardner (Harcourt, Brace), the best one-volume popular history

of art that I know. It stretches from the earliest times to the present day and covers all countries, yet preserves an appearance of depth; one gets from it the comforting assurance of sincerity as well as of accuracy. There are any number of small but very clear pictures, so arranged that you do not need to turn over pages to get at them. I have just found that the pictures in any of the histories of art that scatter small photographic illustrations freely through their text are brought out beautifully with an ordinary reading-glass such as costs a quarter anywhere; besides enlarging, they take on a relief something like that given by the obsolescent stereoscope. I do not say obsolete for it is still in use in the happy village from which I have just returned—and next to a kaleidoscope, I know of no neater magic.

W. R., Detroit, Mich., asks for books for a girl between twelve and fifteen.

I MUST keep in this reply to the new ones just coming in: among these there are some unusually good stories. If you want a volume of them selected by real girls, "Girl Scout Stories" (Doran), the second collection chosen from the columns of the Girl Scout Magazine, *The American Girl*, will be a safe and satisfactory choice. These are of the various types beloved of the teens—mystery, school, romance, sport, and the rest—genuine and up-to-date enough to make the material for future history. The pictures are excellent, and the whole volume a good gift for a girl, whether scout or not.

"Raquel of the Ranch Country," by Alida Sims Malkus (Harcourt, Brace), is to girls' stories what the work of half-a-dozen specialists in cowboy literature is to stories for grown-ups. If there have been cow-girl tales for young readers I have never found them; this is evidently a book out of experience, and the plot, while sufficiently thrilling, is not at all bookish. It opens in a boarding-school but fortunately breaks out soon. "Ship of Dreams," by Edith Ballinger Price (Cen-

tury), is another unusual outdoor story for girls: the central figure is a boy who sails on what is meant to be a quiet trip to Africa to pick up a cargo of ivory, but there are enemies on board who blow up the ship, and the rest of the tale takes place in the ivory country, rescuing people and getting into trouble. I would have liked this when I was fifteen. "Janny," by Jane Abbott (Lippincott), will be taken gladly by a young public to whom Mrs. Abbott wears the mantle of Louisa Alcott. This book is Alcottish in plot; a girl from Painted Post comes to live with a rich uncle's family in New York, not without snubs; misfortune, however, does for them what it did for the family visited by the old-fashioned Polly in the seventies or was it the eighties? There is a pleasant home-flavor about "The Real Reward," by Christine Whiting Parmenter (Little Brown), which opens with a wedding in a New Hampshire village, attended by a pair of twins belonging to a large and amusing family group. A diamond necklace is missed from the presents, but the solution of the mystery is not what it is in grown-up tales of this sort. The mystery story for young readers, by the way, is developing a tradition of its own, and Augusta Huell Seaman is one of its prophets. The Century Co. publish her books. "The Tartar Princess," by the Russian writer most popular with girls in this country, L. A. Charskaya (Holt), is the third in a series that began with "Little Princess Nina," and as rattledly-bang as the others; it opens by throwing her down a cliff and into the arms of a posse of bandits. Nevertheless it is not cheap stuff; the adventures are no more than a young lady in this part of the world—the Caucasus Mountains—may expect if she will go riding alone "possessed of all the charms of that type only to be found in the Lezgin auls of the Daghestan Mountains." "Soapsuds' Last Year," by Ethel C. Bridgman (Century), is an amusing school story, and Earl R. Silver's, "Carol at Highland Camp," (Appleton), a conventional summer-camp story of a snob's reform, interesting to girls who go to camp. "Pansy" (Mrs. Isabella Alden) now in her eighties, has written a new book, "The Fortunate Calamity" (Lippincott), the catastrophe being an old aunt who turns out much better than expected. It is a gentle and pleasant story,

with the Christian virtues given a chance. "Downright Dencey," by Caroline Snedeker (Doubleday, Page), is about a Quaker girl in old Nantucket; every lover of the island, young or old, will be charmed with it, and Dencey is a real addition to our young heroines.

The Isabel Carleton books, by Margaret Ashmun (Macmillan), have been given a new dress, and now appear with a convincing portrait of the heroine on the jacket: "Isabel Carleton's Year," "The Heart of Isabel Carleton," "Isabel Carleton's Friends," "Isabel Carleton in the West," and "Isabel Carleton at Home." These go from the last year in high school through college to the settling-down period; they are not to be confused with "series-books" in general, being of a much better quality. This may be because Margaret Ashmun's novels for adults have power and weight—see, for example, "The Lake" and "Pa." Sophia Cleugh writes about crinoline days convincingly; now she has taken to French history and manages to produce a perfectly respectable romance of the time of Louis XIV—unless an abduction at the altar be regarded as irregular. This occurs in "Jeanne Margot" (Macmillan) the story of a goose-girl who went to Mme. de Maintenon's St. Cyr and then to court.

These are all for the fifteen-year edge of this request: I do not know where to put Laura Spencer Portor's "The Little Long Ago" (Dutton), or indeed whether it should be called a child's book at all. But remembering that the stories I loved best were those that began "when I was a little girl," and that my own childhood, thus told to my daughter, was always in active demand, I think Mrs. Portor's exquisite remembrance of a happy childhood would make valued reading-aloud even to little children. It is a comfort to come upon one writer who has no grouch against either her family or her home—come to think of it, I have found two this year, the other being the anonymous author of "The House Made with Hands" (Bobbs-Merrill), who also wrote "Miss Tiverton." The latest (though in England earliest) novel is so charming that I cannot see why the writer insists on keeping under cover—unless indeed she thinks it too hopelessly old-fashioned to remember one's parents with admiration.

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