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Books of Special Interest

Trout

THE EVOLUTION OF TROUT AND TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA. By CHARLES Z. SOUTHARD. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1928. \$10.

Reviewed by HENRY S. CANBY

THIS is a handsome and elaborate book illustrated by colored plates and many cuts, but unlike many handsome books on trout fishing published annually, it is rich in interesting facts, careful advice, and scientific study. Mr. Southard is not content to tell how to fish; he goes very thoroughly into the condition of our streams, the best methods of stocking, and the best kinds of trout. Even more interesting than these statistical studies are his forthright comments on the vulgar errors about trout which have been copied from book to book, and his studies of trout vision and trout feeding habits with reference to their capture. Probably no American book has ever contained so much valuable information on local conditions here. Indeed this book should be reprinted as a small and inexpensive manual. It deserves a wider circulation than its present price and format will permit.

Mr. Southard has a convincing way with him. He seems to be that rare combination, a scientist sportsman, and when he says, in opposition to all the familiar writers, that a trout put back, whether handled with wet hands or dry, will live unless wounded to bleeding, he carries belief with him. Ten thousand troutlings, sneaked into the creel because "they are sure to die anyhow," should live upon that word. Books upon trout fishing are usually suspected of being composed for glamorous reading by a winter fire; or if not that, the highly technical experiences of a hopelessly expert fisher who makes our amateur wadings seem a little ridiculous. But this book is a background for every kind of trout fishing, from dry flies in the most difficult waters to the beginner's puzzlement as to where the trout are hid. It is not, considering its size, a possible vade-mecum; but it should be.

Folk Song

YANKEE DOODLE-DOO. A Collection of Songs of the Early American Stage. Edited by GRENVILLE VERNON. Payson & Clarke. 1928.

AMERICAN MOUNTAIN SONGS. Collected by ETHEL PARK RICHARDSON. Edited and Arranged by SIGMUND SPAETH. New York: Greenberg. 1928.

Reviewed by DOROTHEA WITHINGTON

IN the first of these volumes it is interesting to note the decline of the eighteenth century English tradition in music on the American stage. We are given a few examples of home-grown opera, written and produced in Philadelphia around 1760, wherein are discernible certain similarities to the Beggars Opera type. The tone of the lyrics and the fact that some of the tunes are borrowed from the same great period of English melody, both contribute to the likeness. Following these we find a series of hopeful attempts to write the great American opera. "Tammany or the Indian Chief," by Mrs. Hatton, was one of them. She was a sister of Charles Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, who drifted to New York in the course of an adventurous career. But even she failed to create anything that has come down to us as more than quaint. Most of the contemporary attempts seem quite dull to the modern taste. Unhappily we discover that as the nineteenth century wears on to the Civil War the case becomes no better. In fact, to judge by the examples given in the book, American musical entertainment grows duller and duller up to 1850. That the art of writing operas failed to develop at this time, is ascribed to the searing influence of Puritanism. We are not told why it has failed to come off since.

The charming cover of this book would seem to offer an interesting reward to the average reader, but in reality it is a book to interest the historian and antiquarian. The songs have no accompaniments, which puts them outside of the range of enjoyment by the amateur. It is doubtful, except in the case of borrowed tunes, whether the melodies would offer much to the average musician. If it fails as a book of songs (and such a book doubtless was not the aim of the compiler), it presents to the his-

torian a revealing study of contemporary musical and dramatic culture.

In the second volume we find an authoritative collection of American folk songs gathered from the Southern mountains by a native of that country. She has wisely not tried to duplicate the work of people like Cecil Sharp and has not included the ballads brought over from England that are still sung unchanged. There are a few that she calls "Americanized" which serve as an interesting contrast, in their greater melodic beauty, to the impoverished American tunes that follow. All of these songs have the real source of life which comes through the necessity of expression by singing, and some of them have a moving charm. "Keerless Love," here given in its starkest form, is a poignant expression of agonized surprise and despair. Many of the ballads and nonsense songs will prove irresistible to hearty singers everywhere.

The book is well arranged with an excellent introduction showing how the language of the mountaineer of to-day is closely related to that of the Elizabethan, an adequate index, simple accompaniments to the songs suggesting the melody and the guitar, and finally intelligent comments on the origins of the songs themselves. So that we have not only a book of songs that will appeal to the average singer, but also a clear reflection of the lives of their creators.

A Good Thriller

THE DAWSON PEDIGREE. By DOROTHY SAYERS. New York. Lincoln MacVeagh: The Dial Press. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by EDMUND PEARSON

PROBABLY I am unique in being susceptible to flattery. No one else, on hearing that his words had been quoted in a detective novel, would have hurried, as I did, to see the book. No one else would have been so delighted to discover that what Miss Sayers has done in "The Dawson Pedigree" (in England it is named "Unnatural Death") is to quote De Quincey, or Charles Lamb, or some person unknown, and to give me the credit for the great man's wise words. As a result, I bought the book, read it, hastened to read this author's two earlier novels,—and began to wonder if I had not been too crabbed about modern detective stories. If many of them offer such amusement, such first-rate entertainment as "The Dawson Pedigree." . . . Consider, first, what Miss Sayers does in this novel. Or, please, first, consider what she has not done. She has not created a detective who is a wearisome bore, to whom you long to have Charlie Chaplin apply the custard-pie treatment. Instead, he is clever, and thoroughly likable.

Next, she has not adhered to the cast-iron plot, which is to start to find the murderer; to point suspicion at A, B, C, D, E, F, and G, in turn; and finally, in the last chapter, to prove that the real criminal is Z,—a person in whom the reader takes no interest whatever. Moreover, in the usual novel, Z is only a technical murderer, since it appears that H, the murdered man, was such an utter scoundrel that to kill him was really a Boy Scout's good deed.

Why can not the novelists learn that the murderer of a villain, is for the purpose of fiction, no murderer at all? The victim must be a good person,—else, why all the hullabaloo? De Quincey knew that, a century ago. I have asked a man, learned in the ways of our publishers, why this milk-and-water method is inevitable in detective novels, and he tells me that the *Saturday Evening Post* is to blame. That weekly is dedicated to the proposition that this is the best of all possible worlds, and that to admit that a good man might get murdered would be treason. All novelists long to write for the *Saturday Evening Post*,—and hence all murders in novels are really nothing but the meritorious removal of rascals.

Miss Sayers fairly soon lets you know who is probably the murderer. The excitement lies in the chase and the detection. The victim is, at least, blameless. As the story advances, the victims increase in number, and very much in virtue and attractiveness. Hence the crimes are real crimes; the murderer is a wicked person—not a philanthropist—and the detectives are engaged in useful work.

Her amateur detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, is of the "silly ass" type, but he is engaging and agreeable. He is really humorous; his fads are pleasant ones. And his first assistant, Miss Climpson, is, I think,

a new type in this work. No one but Lord Peter would have employed her. It is true that Lord Peter is rather a dangerous character: his activity in the matter of the death of Agatha Dawson caused three murders to blossom, where only one grew before. Nevertheless, I am impatient to read of his next adventure.

The Spell of Greece

THE BLESSING OF PAN. By LORD DUNSANY. New York: G. P. Putnam. 1928.

Reviewed by JOHN GERARD

IT has ever been the custom of the subtle Celt to ruffle the tranquil surface of his thick-witted Sassenach overlord's stolidity.

As the scene of "The Blessing of Pan" is laid in England, the Briton comes in for his share of sly mockery, though the book is written in far too joyous a strain to be in any way bitter or polemical. Its theme, too, is much more inclusive, for it is at once an indictment of our mechanical era and a plea for a return to the ancient, slumbering memories of Nature which lie buried in all of us. One can, that is, read all these and many more meanings into Lord Dunsany's book.

But, for my part, I preferred to surrender myself wholly to the enchantment of the author's delicate humor and luminous prose, to the evocation of the magic of Pan—"Pan, of all the Arcadian valleys, King—" to the immortal spell of Greece, woven anew by a true son of Hellas.

The Rev. Elderick Anwrel has been greatly perturbed by the sounds of music wafted at sunset on summer evenings from a hill in his parish of Wolding. Young girls, by twos and threes, following the call of the mysterious piper, have avoided him guiltily on his walks of exploration.

Now Anwrel is a simple man of simple faith, a good type of English country vicar, whose firm belief in the efficacy of cricket as a means to spirituality is sorely shaken by the irruption of this alien element into the peaceful round of daily duties. For he, too, is troubled by these luring strains.

In deep perplexity he writes to the Bishop of the diocese. That distinguished prelate's response brings no help, for it is a thinly veiled, if gracious, command to him to take a holiday and to write again upon his return. His Grace will himself see to it that someone takes the services in Anwrel's absence. But the piping persists. The poor vicar's holiday has done nothing to remove the implied results of overwork. The music is eventually traced to one Tommy Duffin whose inspiration an old village gossip hints to have been the strange dancing of the Rev. Arthur Davidson, the former incumbent of the living.

Gradually, the entire village falls under the immemorial spell of the reeds. Young men, who have sworn to give Duffin a beating for stealing away their girls, are the first to succumb. The eerie tunes charm them as well as their elders. A wholesale defection from the old ways to ways older and dimmer, ways almost lost in the profoundest depths of consciousness, follows inevitably.

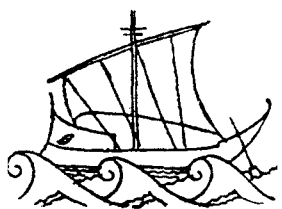
In desperation, Anwrel casts about for help. He goes first to the clergyman who came to Wolding during his absence, "the Hetley," a brilliant classical scholar. Unfortunately, Hetley cannot help him: his period begins with the Peloponnesian War when the worship of the goat-foot god had quite died down. Besides, his great learning has made him completely deaf to the sounds of any such extravagant nonsense as the pipes of Pan. He heard nothing, but, if he might offer a word of advice: cricket—

Sanity, nothing but sanity!

Thus Anwrel is thrown back on his own resources. He realizes at last that the Bench of Bishops, even the embattled might of the entire Establishment, are utterly powerless to cope with his problem. To ignore it is their only weapon.

By what agencies Anwrel, losing his faith, went over to "the enemy" and gained thereby a profound and lasting happiness in the company of those he loved, in an Arcadian simplicity of life, will not be told here.

Suffice it that the people of Wolding, shunned by and unconscious of the world outside, "seemed to find amongst silent unfoldings and ripenings, that are the great occasions of Nature, enough to replace those more resounding changes that are the triumph of man's ingenuity, and which we have gained and they lost."



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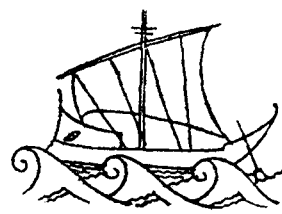
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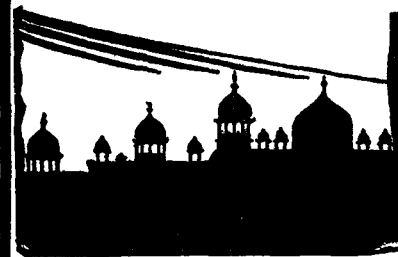
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