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## Foreign Literature

### An Argentine Novel

TIERRA DE JAGUALES. By HUGO WAST. 1927.

Reviewed by HERMINE HALLAM HIPWELL

COMPARED with other, older, nations Argentina barely boasts a hundred years of history. Dating from the wars of independence, started in the year 1810, there is little in those years of guerrilla warfare to tempt any but the most patriotic writer, and it is on this account that the historical novel dealing with Argentina has found but little favor with writing men. One notable exception is afforded by José Mármol's "Amalia" which deals with the days of Rozas the Tyrant's reign. This book, however, can hardly be considered to belong to the historical novel class as it was written during the very days of the federal tyranny and is in the main autobiographical.

The Argentine reading public, however, is avidly interested in everything connected with the early days of the republic, and it is this interest which explains the popularity of a writer like Hugo Wast, whose latest novel, "Tierra de Jaguares," was published early this winter.

This book forms the last of a series of novels dealing with the early years of Argentine independence when the Spanish menaced the young republic on all sides, and the Triumvirate ruling in Buenos Aires was already breaking up, unable to quell the spirit of dissatisfaction prevalent in the provinces. Its characters are royalist refugees wandering in the Paraná Delta in order to escape from the oppression of the Triumvirate. Mr. Wast, which is the pen name used by D. Martínez Zuviria, however, is too true a *criollo* to sympathize wholly with the Spaniards, and it is on this account that the son and daughter of the fugitive, Altolaguirre, as well as his faithful retainers are represented as staunch patriots—and by patriots are meant those who fought, plotted, and worked, for the welfare of the young republic—whom circumstance has placed in a wholly false position.

The plot of the novel is slight, opening with the flight of the Altolaguirres from Buenos Aires, and ending with the victory of the patriots at San Lorenzo. The wanderings of the royalists are cleverly described with a wealth of detail concerning the Paraná Delta which makes interesting reading. Various *criollo* types, too, are sketched with a great deal of understanding insight into their peculiar semi-Indian character, which even today makes of them enigmatic creatures to the average northerner. Life in the delta, which today, fully one hundred years later, is still wild, mysterious, and full of danger for the uninitiated, at the beginning of the last century must have been hazardous and uncertain. Indeed the dangers forever hovering over Altolaguirre's family—dangers from men, beasts, and the elements—have not been one whit exaggerated by the author, who knows his subject thoroughly and is thus able to give to his readers a picture of the islands, the refuge in those days of Indians, half castes, deserters from the army, and wandering *matreros*, or lonely gauchos living chiefly by pillage.

For it is as a faithful interpreter of the life of the people, today and yesterday, that Hugo Wast excels. His style is often slipshod, his plots rarely surprise by their ingenuity, while his heroes and villains are generally obviously very good or very bad, but his *criollo* men and women, the servants to be found in the houses of the great, the riders of the plains, the *gauchos malos* or outlaws, the *chinas* or semi-Indian women, are all of them alive with their charming faults and enduring virtues. Hugo Wast understands thoroughly these people whom modernity, civilization, and cosmopolitan ideals are slowly but surely driving further and further away from the great cities and into the little known corners of the republic. To all who appreciate the life of the Argentine countryside, Hugo Wast's novels are full of a delicate charm, vivid descriptions of an ever interesting countryside, quaint tales of bygone days, and stirring episodes connected with the brave deeds of long ago heroes. And in these days of introspection and brooding self analysis, the fresh naïveté of Hugo Wast's outlook comes as a welcome change in the none too encouraging world of Argentine fiction.

### Argentine Poetry

EL CANTARO Y EL ALFARERO. By FERNAN FELIX DE AMADOR. 1927.

IN Argentina the poetaster, who woos his Muse with grandiloquent and passionate gesture and a vocabulary pompous and absurd, is one of the many burdens of the foreign reviewer's life.

The Spanish language—the language of God according to medieval writers, versed in these matters—is, with its flowing syllables and the cadence of the sonorous words in which still lingers a hint of liquid Moorish vowel sounds, an easy trap for the unwary rhymester. In this country indeed, prose is often closely allied and at times almost mistaken for poetry—poetry on the grand scale in the manner of Calderón de la Barca or Lope de Vega. When these things are considered it is hardly to be wondered at that Argentina's youth, during the long summer nights when the sky is heavy with stars and the perfume of jasmine and roses rises, an enervating incense, from countless riverside gardens, feels compelled to fling its yearnings into flaming, if banal, verse.

That these youngsters all take themselves seriously is undoubtedly wearisome, and it is a pity that unlike too many of their more talented but less fortunate rivals, they are apparently always able to afford a limited yet costly edition of their effusions.

It is on this account that the small group of Argentine poets who truly deserve the title, and who from time to time publish their works in slim, ably-illustrated, volumes, are doubly welcome. Indeed the lyrics of men such as Ricardo Gutierrez, Leopoldo Lugano, Alfredo Bufano, Lagorio and Fernan Felix de Amador, with their sound workmanship, the tender feeling underlying the slow music of the verse, the beauty and brevity of the forms chosen to convey precisely the poet's thoughts to his reader, come always as a glad surprise. For here is no grandiloquence, but instead a simplicity all the more charming and pleasing when it is remembered how difficult of attainment this same simplicity is in the

Spanish language. And among the most simple and at the same time most eloquent of the younger generation of Argentine poets must be counted Fernán Felix de Amador, whose last volume of verse was published early this year.

At one time an ardent admirer of Rubén Darío, acting as his secretary during those hectic days in Paris when the great poet represented one of the Central American republics in a diplomatic capacity, Amador in his latest work shows little or no trace of his master's influence. For Darío's style greatly influenced such early works as "El Libro de las Horas" and "Las Lamparas de Arcilla." In the volume under review, however, Amador reveals himself an exquisitely humble lover of the earth, the wide sea, the gold of sunset and the faint rose of dawn, the mysterious tracings on a deserted beach; his love is tinged with delicate melancholy when he writes of men and the strange works of their hands. Indeed, Amador's muse has always been a trifle melancholy. He seeks in symbols an explanation for the mystery of life. And he regards life with some of the Psalmist's detachment—a lonely singer in the midst of a noisy multitude, proud of his solitude.

Under a sub-heading, "Plain, Sea, and Sky," are gathered those fugitive poems in which the poet delights. They are most of them slight but lovely, impregnated as it were with the melancholy which Amador wears so gracefully. Of these short lyrics the finest are perhaps those in which the poet invokes the sea. Thus in "Dulce Daño" Amador writes the following quatrain:

*"Un estremecimiento de raso hay en la playa  
donde el viento pasea en sandalias de espuma. . . .  
Mas qué pasó, que al pronto todo se asombra  
y calla?  
—Es que desnuda y triste entra en el mar:  
la luna.*

Translation of the lines is impossible, since they lose all their beauty in the process, yet could anything be more delicate than the second line which reads: "where the breeze is walking in sandals of foam?" This little poem with its quiet beauty has all the charm of a Japanese design, and though there is no hint of oriental influence in any of the poems, there are times when the poet recalls the East by means of his attitude to the world about him.



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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

**NINE ESSAYS.** By ARTHUR PLATT. Cambridge University Press. (Macmillan.) 1927.

Mr. Platt was a Cambridge man and Professor of Greek, in University College, London, for thirty years. His chief scholastic works were his edition of Homer, his translations from Aristotle and Aeschylus, and contributions to the *Classical Review* and the *Journal of Philology*. Mr. Housman thinks that his minute and refined studies, in these periodicals, of Homeric metrical and grammatical usage were his most characteristic and probably most valuable contributions.

But he was a man of varied culture and great personal charm. These nine essays were public addresses, and only four of them on classical subjects. Three are on Fitzgerald, La Rochefoucauld, and Cervantes, and very admirable studies they are, wise, witty, and urbane.

In looking back over the many essays in volumes, examined during recent years, two remarks occur to the reviewer. A majority of the essayists were either professional writers or college professors, and the first remark is: that if the essays of the academic men are somewhat less awake to the new phenomena of literature, on the other hand they are apt to carry more weight and substance; that the modern professional critic of life and letters is vigorously outspoken and does not always weigh his words, and the academic man is more deliberate and self-critical. The second remark is: that there is much less difference between the groups than between individuals within each group.

This is rather what one would expect. The modern critic has usually a college background, and the wind of the world blows through the colleges more than it used to. The road between the university and the press or periodical is well travelled and runs both ways. Bad academic writing tends to be conscientious, but wooden; bad professional writing to be lively, but cheap; the good writing of each tends toward the other.

**THE GREAT AMERICAN BAND-WAGON.** By Charles Merz. Day.

**A BUNCH OF NONSENSE.** By Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, and others. Dutton (Everyman's Library). 80 cents.

**CONTEMPORARY ESSAYS.** Edited by William T. Hastings.

**ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS.** By Laurio Magnus. Dutton. \$3.

**THE MESSAGE OF THE CARILLON AND OTHER ADDRESSES.** By W. L. Mackenzie King. Macmillan.

**PREFACES, INTRODUCTIONS, AND OTHER UNCOLLECTED PAPERS.** By Anatole France. Dodd, Mead.

**THE HARMONIES OF NATURE.** By H. W. Shepherd-Walwyn. Dodd, Mead.

**A SEA CHEST.** By C. Fox Smith. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.

**A CURIOUS HISTORY IN BOOK EDITING.** By Kate Stephens. Antigone Press, 236 West 15th Street, New York City. \$2.50.

### Biography

**FRANCESCO PETRARCA, THE FIRST MODERN MAN OF LETTERS. HIS LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE: A STUDY OF THE EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURY (1304-1347) VOL. II: SECLUDED STUDY AND PUBLIC FAME.** By EDWARD H. R. TATHAM. Macmillan. 1927.

The first volume of Canon Tatham's extensive work on Petrarch, briefly reviewed in these pages on July 3, included chapters on the state of Italy and the Papacy from 1300 to 1342, on Petrarch's early life and letters, his Italian lyrics, and his relations with "Laura." The second volume now before us begins with an account of the Latin classics in the Middle Ages, and covers the poet's first and second sojourns at Vaucluse (1337-1347), and the important episode of his coronation at Rome (1341); also the composition of his Latin epic "Africa," and of the autobiographical dialogue "Secretum," with an analysis of each. The famous "Letter to Posterity" and several other letters are given in an excellent English translation. Little is said in this volume about "Laura" and the Italian poems, except that the patriotic ode "Italia mia" is quoted in translation and thoroughly discussed. Petrarch's relations with Cola di Rienzo are touched upon, but a fuller discussion is reserved for the next volume, together with the poet's life and works after 1347.

The author's main interests are the character of Petrarch, particularly as shown in his Latin writings, and the political and ecclesiastical history of the period; and these are made vividly interesting. The average educated man, even though, as Canon Tatham says, "his interest may be aroused by some crumbling ruin in his own neighborhood," has no clear idea of the conditions under which the states of modern Europe awoke to national consciousness; the details of individual lives, interpreted with the proper political and intellectual background, make us realize that the men of the fourteenth century were more like ourselves than we are apt to suppose. From this point of view, Petrarch is supremely important; and the present publication, when completed, promises to be the most comprehensive general account of his life and times, his friends and his writings, available in English. In spite of a few inaccurate or inadequate statements, it is based on faithful study of the available material, some of which has not hitherto been used in a work of this kind.

(See page 607)

### Fiction

**"WALT."** By ELIZABETH CORBETT. Stokes. 1928. \$2.50.

This author lets the Good Gray Poet speak for himself in some of the series of colloquies that make up this volume. The book is undeniably interesting; the voices of the principal actors in the story of Walt Whitman's life talk to us convincingly out of the past in dramatic scenes and conversations. Louisa Van Velsor Whitman has her say, Edward C. Clarke, Hartshorne, Clements, Brenton, Ned Wilkins, Murphy, McClure, and Van Anden. Here is the delicious Fernande Desmoulins of New Orleans (Whitman's Southern love), her inimical father, old Pfaff of the famous Pfaff's basement restaurant on Broadway near Bleecker, the literary figures of Poe and Emerson, John Burroughs, and the English Edward Carpenter. Whitman's whole varied life is traced through brief encounters presented in dialogue; an interesting and original conception, the execution of which holds the attention and gives a well-rounded idea of Walt. It is neither academic biography nor a biographical novel, but the whole pageant of a great life is condensed in these pages. This book, together with Grant Overton's "The Answerer" and Cameron Rogers's "The Magnificent Idler," is new proof that the story of one who remains perhaps our greatest American poet has exerted no inconsiderable fascination upon the minds of this age, even as much modern poetry is proof of his artistic influence. We are glad to possess this new and freshly-fashioned contribution to much exhaustive Whitmaniana. Where Whitman is taught it should prove excellent collateral reading for beginners in the study of his career.

**TRAGEDY AT RAVENTHORPE.** By J. J. Conington. Little, Brown. \$2 net.

**THE GOLDEN BUBBLE.** By Courtney Ryley Cooper. Little, Brown. \$2 net.

**MRS. CRADDOCK.** By W. Somerset Maugham. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.50.

**ONSLAUGHT.** By Joan Sutherland. Harpers. \$2.

**THE CABIN AT THE TRAIL'S END.** By Sheba Hargreaves. Harpers. \$2.

**THE WAY THINGS ARE.** By E. W. Delafield. Harpers.

**RED RUST.** By Cornelia James Cannon. Little, Brown. \$2.50 net.

**THE BLESSING OF PAN.** By Lord Dunsany. Putnam. \$2.

**PEGGY BY REQUEST.** By Ethel M. Dell. Putnam. \$2.

**CHILDREN OF THE FOG.** By Carmel Haden Guest. Putnam. \$2.

**GEORGIAN STORIES.** Edited by Arthur Waugh. Putnam. \$2.50.

**ORPHAN DINAH.** By Eden Phillpotts. (Widecombe Edition). Macmillan.

**MISER'S MONEY.** By Eden Phillpotts. (Widecombe Edition). Macmillan.

**MR. FORTUNE, PLEASE.** By H. C. Bailey. Dutton. \$2.

**THE VOICE OF THE SEVEN SPARROWS.** By Harry Stephen Keeler. Dutton. \$2.

**LUCK AND OTHER STORIES.** By Mary Arden. Day. \$2 net.

**RED HORSES.** By Felix Riesenber. McBride. \$2 net.

**THE CASSIODORE CASE.** By A. Richard Martin. McBride. \$2 net.

**SHOT ON THE DOWNS.** By Victor L. Whitechurch. Duffield. \$2 net.

**HYACINTH.** By Dion Clayton Calthorpe. Duffield. \$2.

**THE GYPSY.** By W. B. Trites. Stokes. \$2.

**THE DOOR UNLATCHED.** By Marie Cher. Minton, Balch. \$2.

(Continued on next page)

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