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The New Books

(Continued from preceding page)

Fiction

COLORADO. By WILLIAM MACLEOD
RAINE. Doubleday, Doran. 1928. \$2.

Mr. Raine gives us early Colorado in full and persuasive detail. We see Denver in 1860, with its shanty-lined streets, its brutal citizenry, and its primitive justice. The picture is decidedly stimulating in its reminder that the pioneer days of Colorado are within the memory of men and women now living. We in the snug East need to have our memories thus jogged. The novel does more than that, however, for in it we get an unpretentious, satisfactory adventure story, in which we find the usual outlaws, stagecoaches, and saloons. In addition, there is the love of a lusty lad for a beautiful girl. We find nothing remarkable in the plot, to be sure, but our common sense suffers no assaults. "Colorado" is, in short, agreeable adventure set against a splendid background.

THE CURSE OF THE TARNIFFS. By
COUNT EDOUARD VON KEYSERLING. Trans-
lated by Arthur J. Ashton. Macaulay.
1928. \$2.50.

Modern German literature could surely send us more suave and ingratiating ambassadors than the three narratives that are included in Count Edouard Von Keyserling's volume, "The Curse of the Tarniffs." Gaunt, bare, and somewhat hollow, these stories seem to be projects for fiction rather than the full, completed work. The plots move jerkily, and the characters lack depth. Encountering this volume, the reader of contemporary novels in English will find himself unsatisfied and—we fear—uninterested.

The title story, which is the longest, is the least pleasing; it tells of aristocratic intrigue with country wenches, and it is set in an almost feudal society in modern Prussia. "My Love Affair" and "Father and Son" are the other two: the former is a diary in the manner of a weary Guy de Maupassant; the latter notes the lack of sympathy between adolescence and maturity when both are engaged in amorous maneuvers.

HIGH THURSDAY. By ROGER BURLINGAME. Scribner's. 1928. \$2.

Mr. Burlingame devotes himself in "High Thursday" to character and environment rather than to a swift march of events. He gives us a group of artists, shows us their relation to life, their pleasures, their difficulties, and, finally, develops two of his characters so fully that for the moment we share their lives. These two are husband and wife, Tom and Jane Madden, the man a critic, the woman the force that keeps him constantly at his best. When calamity, in the person of a primitive blonde, threatens the working alliance between them, we find Mr. Burlingame writing excellent fiction. "High Thursday" is pleasantly diverting always, and if we are inclined occasionally to wish for events rather than conversation, we soon forget our restiveness in a delight at some surely-developed incident or at a moment of brilliant sympathy with these serio-comic slaves to Art. The novel is intelligent, disciplined, and worthy of adult reading.

SCABBY DICKSON. By Richard Blaker. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.50.

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

THE PROFESSOR'S POISON. By Neil Gordon. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.

PARACHUTE. By Ramon Guthrie. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.

THE LIE. By Helen R. Martin. Dodd, Mead. \$2.

THE AXE. By Sigrid Undset. Knopf. \$3.

PLEASANT JIM. By Max Brand. Dodd, Mead. \$2.

THE BEST FRENCH SHORT STORIES OF 1926-27 AND THE YEARBOOK OF THE FRENCH SHORT STORY. Edited by Richard Eaton. Dodd, Mead. \$2.50.

THE DAWSON PEDIGREE. By Dorothy Sayers. Dial. \$2.

SHAKEN BY THE WIND. By Ray Strachey. Macmillan \$2.50.

THE LUXURY HUSBAND. By Maysie Greig. Dial. \$2.

TRACKS IN THE SNOW. By Lord Charnwood. Dial. \$2.

History

SOME FAMOUS SEA FIGHTS. By FITZ-
HUGH GREEN and HOLLOWAY FROST.
Century Co. 1927. \$3.50.

Eight famous naval actions from Salamis to Jutland are narrated in the volume with sufficient introductory material in each instance to give the historical setting. The authors are officers of the American Navy. Commander Green has served in Arctic expeditions and has had considerable experience in writing. His colleague has been a

student of naval history, and was selected to make a critical study of the Battle of Jutland for the War College. Both are well equipped to discuss these battles from the naval officers' point of view, and the accounts are well written. Most of the material, however, has been worked over so often that there is little new to say. The chapter on "Gibraltar," however, is less hackneyed, for it presents a picture of the naval activities of the Dutch at the time of their glory; and this is a story too often skipped by English and American writers on "famous sea fights."

THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1568. By CAPTAIN BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO, one of the Conquerors. Translated from the original Spanish by Maurice Keatinge. McBride. 2 vols. 1927. \$10.

The editor of "The Argonaut Series" is to be commended for selecting the narrative of bluff old Bernal Diaz del Castillo as volumes III and IV of that series. It is unfortunate, however, that he did not make a new translation of the work instead of reprinting the Keatinge adaptation of 1800; for Keatinge's is not a real translation, although it retains in much the spirited style of the original Spanish of 1632. Even its original, "Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva-Espana Escrita por el Captain Bernal Diaz del Castillo" (Madrid, 1632), is not in all respects the real account of that doughty warrior, but one edited from his manuscript by a friar, one Father Alonso Remon, over sixty years after its author wrote it and a century and over since the stirring deeds told in the narrative were enacted. Fortunately, the original manuscript, albeit somewhat dilapidated, was discovered by the Mexican scholar, Genaro Garcia, who published it in 1904. This is the version that should have been used by Mr. Smith had he wished to win the gratitude of scholars.

Mr. Smith has written an excellent introduction to the narrative which should not be slighted even by the reader who boasts that he never reads such preliminary matter. The reader will find therein an excellent analysis of the character of the blunt, rough, straightforward, and truthful fighting captain; and the latter's reason for writing his narrative—his fear lest the leader of the Conquest take not only his own legitimate praise but that of the men under him as well.

The story, even in its emasculated Keatinge form, is really one of the great books of American history and much more interesting than a "best seller." It is a straightforward story, told simply, and with no other art than its simplicity. It fulfils its aim, and the exaggerations of Francisco López de Gomara, who wrote to enhance the fame of Cortes, are well shown forth. Diaz del Castillo wrought better than he knew, for by his narrative, we are able to check up on the incidents of the Conquest and to correct false impressions. But we still await the translation of the real Diaz del Castillo version.

Miscellaneous

EBONY AND TOPAZ: A COLLECTANEA. Edited by CHARLES S. JOHNSON. New York: National Urban League, 17 Madison Avenue.

Mr. Johnson is the editor of *Opportunity*, *A Journal of Negro Life*, a magazine keeping abreast of the latest achievements by negroes in literature, art, and music. His is a consistently interesting and inspiring periodical. In "Ebony and Topaz" he has collected, chiefly from the files of *Opportunity*, certain stories, sketches, essays, translations, pictures, and poetry, mainly the work of his race. The cover and a number of the illustrations of the paper-bound volume are by Charles Cullen and Aaron Douglas, both distinguished negro draughtsmen with unusual gifts. Such poets as Countée Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Arna Bontemps are represented. Prose by Arthur Huff Fauset and Gwendolyn Bennett, with Alain Locke's brief appraisal of the negro renaissance in art, should be mentioned also. White writers on the negro such as Paul Green, Julia Peterkin, Professor Ellsworth Faris, and others contribute interestingly. A rare poem on "the Runaway Slave," by Elizabeth Barrett Browning is reproduced; two hitherto unpublished poems by Phyllis Wheatley, the first, eighteenth-century negro poet; facsimiles of original manuscripts by Paul Laurence Dunbar; and there is comment upon Robert S. Duncanson, the phenomenal colored American painter who established his reputation years before the Civil War. This is an indication of the scope and variety of the volume's contents.

Mr. Alain Locke seems to us to set forth

extremely well the nature of the present phase of artistic expression through which the negro is passing, well illustrated in some of the contents of this book. Here are his words:

There was a time when the only way out of sentimental partisanship was through a stridently self-conscious realism. That attitude stripped the spiritual bloom from the work of the Negro writer; gave him a studied and self-conscious detachment. It was only yesterday that we had to preach objectivity to the race artist to cure the pathetic fallacies of bathos and didactic approach. We are just beginning perhaps to shake off the artifices of that relatively early stage; so to speak the Umbrian stiffness is still upon us and the Florentine ease and urbanity looms just ahead. It is a fiction that the black man has until recently been naïve: in American life he has been painfully self-conscious for generations—and is only now beginning to recapture the naïveté he once originally had.

Poetry

HALE'S POND and Other Poems. By JAMES WHALER. New York: Harold Vinal. 1927. \$2.

Out of a dozen new publications by the prolific poetry publisher, Harold Vinal, here is one with true promise and not a little achievement. Between the covers of books with the other titles, "Vibrations," "Wings and Whishes," "Sedge Fire," "Glamourie and Whimsy," "The Bells of Italy," "Where the Hours Go," "Verse Fancies," "Wandering Cries," "Tomorrow," "To All You Ladies," "Riders in the Sun," and "Brushstrokes," we were able to discover nothing of importance. Virginia Lyne Tunstall's "A White Sail Set" was somewhat better. Her traditional Muse demonstrated cultivation above the Muses of the others. "A Ballad of Craigmillar" was good as modern ballads go. Her technique in her limited field had a certain firmness and sureness. But in James Whaler's book about Maine we touched a far more exciting thing. This man has observed as a native, with keen artistic relish; he has something of Robert Frost's gift for thoroughly honest description with the smack of originality. Here, for instance, is the boy in the pond:

Was I not muskrat, water-snake, raccoon?
Was I not dragon-fly and diving loon?
Pollwog, dreaming under lily-pads?
Victor of song in frog-olympiads?
Crawfish investigating runes of stone?
Minnow of sucking glass and glassy bone?
I flamed a water-beetle's fat vermilion;
I joined the water-striders' cool cotillion;
I made my body calamus for thin
Silk fish to nibble at me, toe to chin;
And once, while I was floating like a mink,
Straight in my face a doe looked down to drink!
I saw my soul burn in her golden eyes,
Globed among ecstasies!

That is stuff of strong grain, admirably fresh and authentic. To be sure, this first poem in the book, "Runaway" owes something to the Masfield method in "The Everlasting Mercy." That method can never be as new again. There is a fight on a smaller scale that recalls in its gusto the Masfield incident. And Whaler is not without his clumsinesses, his cosmic emptinesses, his lop-sided construction. But then he strikes out, again,

Who spoke!
Only a barred owl yawning up an oak,
Scenting the milk-snake at the moon's dim breast.

No doubt but this man of Maine has genuine gifts! If he can do execrably, prove unaccountably guilty of such a line as "O fellow-wit to bash Time's weevil-tooth!" he ever and again shakes off his worst and jumbled writing and plunges you actually into the "vat of Maine sunshine, in a drift of impersonal Maine snow." He tells his tales of the logging camps with zest, of the plague of rats at one camp and a new sort of pied piper, of the liquor of Jordan, the Grave of Rose Meservey, the legendary lady of Katahdin. His is rapid narrative, full of jolts and snags, but vigorous and lively. When he rises to exordium in the intervals he is apt to be long-winded; but when he plunges into forthright fervid, natural description of the country he knows he touches achievement.

James Whaler is worth reading and watching. The fulness of his powers may possibly enrich American poetry with another regional poet of the first importance.

POEMS. By Robert Underwood Johnson. Published by the author, 26 East 55th Street, New York City.

STARDUST. By William Adams Slade. Providence: Preston & Rounds.

THE FIRST HARVEST. By Mary Leighton. Four Seas.

THE BEACON LIGHT. By Murray Ketchum Kirk. Vinal. \$1.50.

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. P. M., Baltimore, Md., asks for any good collections of ballads besides those by Pound and Child, or any books on the development of the ballad that are not too deep; he has Pound's "Poetic Origins and the Ballad."

THE following list does not pretend to be a bibliography of the ballad, even as it appears in America. On this subject I am no scholar, nor even one of those "pseudo-scholars" whose uses and excuses in the scheme of things E. M. Forster disarmingly sets forth in the course of his "Aspects of the Novel" (Harcourt, Brace). But ever since my eighteenth year, when an unaccountable ambition to run down the songs quoted in the plays of Shakespeare sent me through "Percy's Reliques," I have kept up a comfortable interest in folk-music and balladry and have gathered rather than collected a good many books and even manuscript copies. This has not been enough to induce the polemic attitude of the true expert, but permits me to understand the delight that must have been W. R. Mackenzie's when he set out on "The Quest of the Ballad" (Princeton University Press), to trace our songs to their remaining singers in the lost corners of the country.

As the student has already F. C. Child's "English and Scottish Popular Ballads" (Houghton Mifflin), he is prepared to find survivals and variants of these in our native minstrelsy. A good book for making a start is Eckstoem and Smith's "Minstrelsy of Maine" (Houghton Mifflin), lately issued, the largest collection of its kind, made from songs of woods and coast. See in this the highly informing story of "How Dan Golden made up a new song," and see how old is the song that lives again in his modern version. Notice also that music is not given in this collection; I have come to think this less important than I used to believe; ballads are so often sung by people with no musical ear, indeed scarce able to carry a tune, that tunes get a terrible twist. "One would suppose," say these editors, "that this went to the tune of 'The Old Oaken Bucket,' but instead it went to one of his own which beggars description." If one has ever tried to note down a shanty from the weatherworn voice of an old sailor, he wonders how Carl Sandburg ever brought the hundreds of songs in "The American Song Bag" (Harcourt, Brace) into melodic shapes that will remain as standard versions. This volume is a constant joy; if I could have but one American collection I would raise the seven dollars and a half needed for it and think it a bargain. Its work-songs are especially fine; I looked through them with some misgivings lest they include "Lackawanna Spooners," a ballad I never yet saw in print, and that I fondly dream I alone of living Americans can sing. My distinction yet remains; the only man I know who knew even a few lines of it is a leading citizen of Northern New York, and even he didn't know the air. This is not, as an uninhibited modern mind might fancy, a song of dalliance, but the rallying cry of two gentlemen who "shovel coal from Harlem to Gowanus," spooners being rapid professional handlers of the shovel. Stanzas of this ballad will be swapped with readers, if any, who know it, but I cannot send through the mail the howl at the end of each verse.

Resuming the tally: "Songs and Ballads of the Maine Lumberjacks" came from the Harvard University Press in 1924; the Massachusetts Historical Society in volume 75 of its publications (1922) printed a check-list of broadsides and ballads printed in that State up to 1800, as found in twenty-five libraries: the *Journal of the American Folk-Lore Society* is full of songs of which every now and then the music also will appear. "Songs from the Hills of Vermont," collected by Sturgis and Hughes (Schirmer), have won real popularity on the concert stage. The Altoona *Times-Tribune* published in 1923 a pamphlet "North Pennsylvania Minstrelsy," from the backwoods of the "Black Forest," 1849-1923.

"English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians," by Olive Campbell and Cecil Sharp (Putnam), and Loraine Wyman and Howard Brockway's "Lonesome Tunes" (Gray) from the Kentucky Mountains, have the music. "Folk Songs of the South," by J. H. Cox (Harvard University Press) has some of the airs. Shanties are international, at least one finds variants of words and tunes everywhere. Johanna Colcord's "Roll

and Go" (Bobbs-Merrill) is a splendid collection; there is a good little one by C. Fox Smith called "Shanty Songs" (Methuen), and the Harvard University Press issues "Ballads and Songs of the Shanty Boy," by Franz Rickaby. This is by no means all you can get, but from one you learn about others. For example, I thus learned that "The Flying Cloud," a collection of 150 old poems and ballads of seaports and the Great Lakes, the Big Pine Woods and the prize ring, was published in paper by the Quickprint, Virginia, Minn., 1922.

"Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads," by John A. Lomax, who has made this field his special preserve, was first published by Sturgis & Walton in 1910 and has been since revised. Not long ago the most successful attempt to put into musical notation the characteristic effects of the negro spiritual was made by J. W. Johnson in "The Book of American Negro Spirituals" (Viking Press), whose deserved success soon brought "The Second Book of Negro Spirituals" (Viking). "Congaree Sketches," by E. C. L. Adams (University of North Carolina), has religious antiphonals with all the effect of songs. Anyone interested in the process of transforming necessary repetitions into melodic phrases should have kept an ear open for the little negro boys who stand at the door of large markets on 125th Street selling to customers large paper bags for their parcels. Beginning with the simple statement "Shopping Bags," they had in ten days achieved a distinct tune, the stress on the second syllable of each word, and "ba-ags" in two notes not unlike a "Scotch snap." Howard W. Odum has made a special study of "Negro Workaday Songs" in his volume published by the University of North Carolina, which also publishes his "The Negro and his Songs." "Singing Soldiers," by John J. Niles (Scribner), goes through the Great War.

"The Book of Navy Songs," edited by the Trident Society of the U. S. N. (Doubleday, Page) gives over one hundred from "Anchor's Aweigh" to "Zamboanga," historical, wardroom, fo'castle, landing-party, and naval academy songs included. "The Chelsea Song Book," lately published here by Minton, Balch, is a large volume with an unusual collection of English folksongs and music from early operettas and other sources not hackneyed. "Full and By," well-saturated songs in a volume sponsored by Cameron Rogers and Edward Wilson, have Mr. Wilson's gorgeous pictures; those in "My Pious Friends and Drunken Companions," collected by Frank Shay and illustrated by John Held, Jr. (Macaulay), are both wet and dry. We have been taking so strong an interest in our historic middle-distance that the songs of these days are bound to reappear; the success of Sigmund Spaeth's "Read 'Em and Weep" (Doubleday, Page) forced a second collection of the sentimental successes of the hoop-skirt and bustle eras, "Weep Some More, My Lady," and I see that he promises a companion volume, "Gentlemen, Be Seated" (Doubleday, Doran), which I trust I need not explain will be taken from the minstrel stage. Grenville Vernon has given us a needed collection of songs of the early American stage, "robust and uninhibited," called "Yankee Doodle Doo" (Pavson & Clarke), with illustrations from contemporary prints and playbills.

From this the student may select a favored starting point, but from whichever volume he starts he is more than likely to get around to them all in time. Songs have, or rather are, strange powers; they must have something living in them to keep them going for so long, and travelling so tirelessly. Anyway, I am glad so many of them have caught up with me.

N. O. K., Fargo, N. D., asks where to get a list of books illustrated by Arthur Rackham, in whose work she is greatly interested.

A LIST of books illustrated by Arthur Rackham, compiled by F. Cov Kendall, with an introductory note by M. Birnbaum, was privately printed—in an edition of 175 copies by Bruce Rogers—in New York in 1922. I see that a copy is in Dauber & Pine's catalogue for \$20, if that is any help. A correspondent suggests that to the recent advice on advertising books should be added "How to Become an Advertising Man," by Norman Lewis (Ronald Press); this explains the duties of the main types of this work, agency organization and operation, and many practical matters of value to the

(Continued on next page)

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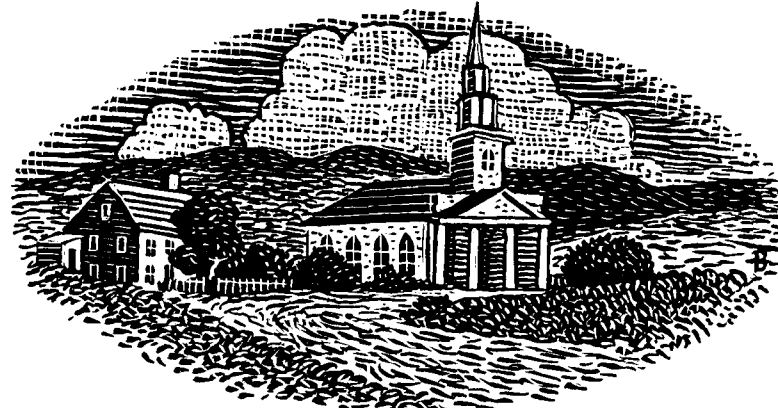
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