

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*.

E. C. F., Philadelphia, tells me to add "Table Service and Decoration," by Lilian M. Gunn (Lippincott), to the list of books given to the reader who wishes to set a table properly and decorate it with taste. John Farrar tells me that Doubleday-Doran now publish "The Gypsy Trail," the very popular traveller's anthology formerly issued by Mitchell Kennerley. E. O. James, Mills College, California, goes out of his way to send me the titles of several books I may need to know about some day, to meet unusual demand.

G. S. B., Lincoln, Nebraska, and R. E. S., Nahant, Mass., ask each for twenty books to be chosen for a club that circulates books of recent publication among its subscribers. I gather from the letters that in the choice "popularity" is to be considered less than merit.

I MAKE this selection from the young mountain of recent literature that confronted me as I opened my study door, and through which I have been with mouse-like patience eating my way ever since. I tried to share this sweet duty—for moan the critics as they may, they do like to have the chance of reading all the new books as they come out—and so called in a solid citizen of standing and understanding, to look over all the books of adventure, Western yarns, and the like, and pass upon their reliability and charm. This effort was blocked, however, for the third book he reached was "Warpath and Cattle Trail," by Hubert E. Collins, introduced by Hamlin Garland (Morrow), and from this he could not be detached for the rest of the afternoon. What is worse, he could not be kept from reading it aloud to me, so that I have now much information about Indian sign language and ordeal-by-torture that I do not see how I am going to use in my business. He says it is the sort of thing about America that Trader Horn found about Africa, and this should recommend it to boys towheaded or gray-headed. There is, of course, another Trader Horn book too, "Harold the Webbed, or, The Young Vykings" (Simon & Schuster), but everyone knows about that.

The first rush of reading was lightened by having already met some of the books in London lately. "Lenin," for instance, by Valeriu Marcu (Macmillan), made a sober and satisfactory sensation there and was received with applause by responsible critics on solid periodicals. It is a nervous, implacable biography, in which personality is so interwoven with destiny it is hard to tell which makes the other. Many of the pictures are those group photographs of multitudes, anonymous and vaguely sinister, that form so striking a feature of Soviet propaganda: they lined the walls of their exhibit at the "Pressa" exhibition at Cologne, for instance. This book seems to me the most valuable to come to us so far from the Russian upheaval. The other Russian biography, "Dostoevsky," by J. Meier-Gräfe (Harcourt, Brace), uses analytical criticism to get at the man through his work and present both to readers already familiar at least with his major novels. There must be Americans enough whose lives have been complicated by this experience to afford the book a large and grateful public in this country: beginners will find in it detailed analyses of several works, notably "The Idiot."

John A. Steuart's "Robert Louis Stevenson: a Critical Biography" (Little, Brown) is now in a new and cheaper two-volume edition: either the outlines of the first one are blurred in my memory, or I have lost the sense of shock, but certainly I cannot now see why anyone should be in the least outraged at this presentation of Stevenson. This may be, of course, because I have in the interval met Mr. Beecher through the medium of Mr. Hibben. The Vailima chapters of this work lead one to "Coming of Age in Samoa," by Margaret Mead (Morrow), a book likely to be somewhat handicapped for the perfectly respectable trade by the hurrah with which the new-moralists are receiving it. It is an admirably impartial and scientifically conducted study of social conditions in a community where life is as well adapted to its environment as it is in Italy under Mussolini, but I cannot see why we should take steps to help either system spread. Mr. George Dorsey says on the jacket, however, that

he wonders if we shall ever be as sensible as the Samoans, and certainly our civilization seldom produces a smile so nearly bisecting a girl's head as the one displayed in the frontispiece.

Such a list as this will be expected to include Keyserling's "Europe" (Harcourt, Brace), and I wonder just what idea of the world over the water Americans will get who see it only through this book. If every now and again one meets keen and accurate results of reporting, these are side by side with such shallow and specious generalizations as quite to destroy the value as a "spiritual Baedeker" the book is supposed to have. Even the confidence of the author slips a trifle by the time he reaches Germany and admits that there are not *les allemands* but *des allemands*, while on his own ground he speaks with evident authority, but the result of his observations in any other country in which I have lived are continually being spoiled for me by this everlasting dogmatizing. Oh well, the Keyserling boom will go rolling on just as well without me.

I do not know how many of us have read Rachel Annand Taylor's "Aspects of the Italian Renaissance," but those who did were waiting for her "Leonardo the Florentine," just published by Harper in a fine great book of some six hundred pages, illustrated by Leonardo's own drawings in colotype. Here a personality unique in the world's history appears as part of a period unlike any other in the world's record. If the style seems often unwarrantably given to fine-writing, somehow the cumulative effect upon the reader is not unlike that of the floridity and exuberance of the period, and surely it is not ill-adapted to descriptions of rich and crowded life in the Milan of the Sforzas and the Florence of the Medici. This is a book for one who is capable of keeping up a long run of reading, for it is uncommonly hard to stop anywhere along its route.

There are several new American biographies, and one reprint in effect a new book, "Abe Lincoln Grows Up," with illustrations by James Daugherty (Harcourt, Brace). This is the first twenty-seven chapters of Carl Sandburg's "Abraham Lincoln: the Prairie Years," separately bound as being of special interest to younger readers, but there is no reason why it should not be prized at any age. I find next to it on my desk "The Lady of the Limberlost," by Jeannette Porter Meehan (Doubleday, Doran), which will interest the countless readers of Gene Stratton Porter, and anyone who has lived in Washington, pre-war or present, will like "My Studio Window," by Marietta Minnegerode Andrews (Dutton), which is illustrated by any number of the author's spirited and satisfactory silhouettes: I never saw so much expression in black-face. This is a book of pleasant chatter about American celebrities: the author seems to have known everybody. "Houdini," by Harold Kellock (Harcourt, Brace), is a story of personal achievement: this man was more than a "magician." For one thing, he was one of the choir invisible providing an illusion of omniscience for this department: whenever I asked for expert advice on one of the sidelines of his literary interests there came back a personal letter none but he could have dictated, with just what I needed.

This list grows too long for one issue: I have but room to remind readers of informative works on present-day international problems that E. Alexander Powell's "Embattled Borders" (Century) one of the publications of the early summer, is a guide through the intricacies of Eastern European politics, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and if that seems remote from our affairs, all I can say is, Heaven send it stays so.

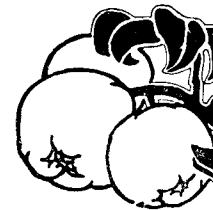
The novels on this list—which was supposed to include only a few outstanding works of fiction—will follow next week.

Colvette's latest novel, "La Naissance du Jour" (Paris: Flammarion), lays its scene among a colony of artists on a bay of the Mediterranean, and depicts with liveliness and skill the life of the group assembled there. Its plot revolves about the familiar theme of the struggle between the woman of mature charms and of charming youth for ascendancy.

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The New Books

Fiction

(Continued from page 151)

THE NEW GUN RUNNERS. By Neil Gordon. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.

WHEN THEY LOVE. By Maurice Baring. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.50 net.

PILLAR MOUNTAIN. By Max Brand. Dodd, Mead. \$2.

ALIMONY. By Faith Baldwin. Dodd, Mead. \$2.

THE YOUNGEST VENUS. By Berta Ruck. Dodd, Mead. \$2.

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THE UNRISEN DAWN. By Anatole France. Translated by J. Lewis May. Dodd, Mead. \$2.50.

THE MAN FROM THE RIVER. By G. D. H. and Margaret Cole. Macmillan. \$2.

A LANTERN IN HER HAND. By Bess Streeter Aldrich. Appleton. \$2.

TALES BY WASHINGTON IRVING. Oxford University Press. 80 cents.

SPANISH SHORT STORIES OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. Revised translation by J. B. Trend. Oxford University Press. 80 cents.

THE COMING OF THE LORD. By Sarah Gertrude Millin. Liveright. \$2.50.

ELEGANT INFIDELITIES OF MADAME LI PEI FOU. By Charles Pettit. Liveright. \$2.50.

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THE SHADOW OF RAVENSCLEIFF. By J. S. Fletcher. Clode. \$2 net.

GREEN WILLOW. By Ethel Mannin. Doubleday, Doran. \$2 net.

Miscellaneous

THE MAKING OF A MERCHANT. By JESSE RAINSFORD SPRAGUE. Morrow. 1928. \$1.75.

All mature people remember still the old-fashioned dry-goods store. The story of Peter Sherwood, in this volume, tells in abundant practical detail just how one American merchant built a great modern department store from a beginning of that kind. This is a record of business that teaches one better than all inflated advertising just exactly what the honest expanding merchant means to the community. John Allen Murphy, business consultant, and former chain store owner, who writes the introduction, asserts what is quite true, that in "The Making of a Merchant" you can find "the changing tastes and habits of America through a period of forty years." He suspects that the book is largely autobiographical; Mr. Sprague was for many years a retail merchant. The story modestly appears as fiction, the story of a life, the history of a business. The reader who engages in other pursuits than that of merchandizing will find it no less interesting in detail than merchants themselves will find it. And they all should read it, both for its paralleling and its digression from their own experience.

FOREST FOLK LORE. By ALEXANDER PORTEOUS. Macmillan Company. 1928. \$5.

This is the sort of book that gets less credit than it deserves, by being so much less interesting and important than it might have been. The intimate association of man in all countries with trees and forest life in general has never yet been subjected to that sort of informed inquiry which throws light not only on the lore of the forest, but on the evolution of social life and custom and ways of thinking. Alexander Porteous has here collected a vast, but not absolutely inclusive amount of folk lore—like most collections it is strongest in the field of middle Europe and feeblest in the American—and has arranged it pleasantly by topics, like specimens in a museum, without any special attempt to refer it to the frame of human living out of which it arose.

It is, indeed, rather a collection of references to forest lore in the world's literature—the world that centers in the Europe that we know best in books—than a collection out of the world's life. In this fashion he has produced a book which the curious will love to consult and the pedantic to refer to; a book which should be in every upper school library, and at the hand of every one to whom reference to such things are important. The bibliography which is incidental to the work is alone an important aid to scholarship in this direction. But the preponderant reference to fragmentary, overworked lore of the region which, from the Mediterranean north was formerly one vast continuous wood, and the comparative neglect of the places and tribes among whom forest life and tree magic are still to be studied as part of living social complexes, rather throws the whole subject out of focus.

The moment any sort of folk lore begins to lose its intimate touch with living practice, a process of selection begins in

(Continued on page 159)

"Give me a kiss,"

he begged ardently. Her head fell back and her blue eyes closed. She did not resist as he held her to him and pressed hot, fervent kisses on her lips.

Opening her eyes languidly, the girl gazed into those above. What she saw there was an expression whose meaning, penetrating the temporary confusion of her mind, was all too clear. She recognized that look. In a flash reaction came.

But Mornington would not release her. Too late his companion realized that she had met her master at the game she had played so long.

"Let me go home, please, I really do feel ill," she begged earnestly.

"Home?" he repeated incredulously. "Do you mean that you've only been playing with me? You're joking!"

With a sharp wrench she tore herself free and backed toward the door.

"I want to go home, Mr. Mornington. I did not expect this of you. No one has ever treated me so brutally in my life," she whimpered as Mornington caught her again in his arms.

"You talk of brutality after playing with me as you have done," he shouted, gazing passionately into her eyes. The girl cried in real earnest as his grip became stronger.

Mornington flung her violently back into a disordered heap on the divan and thrust himself down beside her.

"For God's sake, let me go!" she gasped.

But in spite of her struggles he pressed her closer and closer. Her resistance weakened.

Mornington uttered an oath but his words conveyed nothing to her. The air was rent by her piercing scream and a limp hand pointed before her. Fascinated by her fixed stare, Mornington turned to the direction in which she pointed. The dividing curtains of the rooms had been drawn slightly apart and through the gap gleamed a pair of flaming eyes. There was a flash of light—a pistol shot—and with his arms flung wildly above his head Mornington reeled backwards, then sank suddenly to the floor in an untidy heap—at the foot of a virtuous woman.

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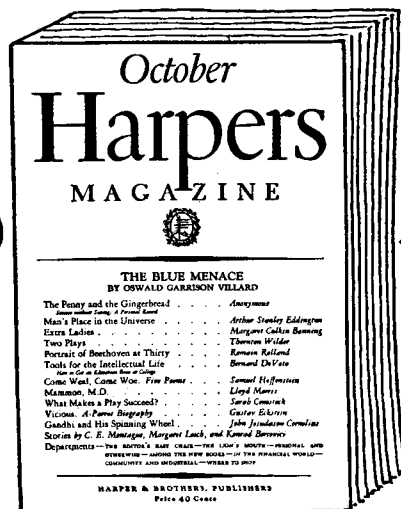
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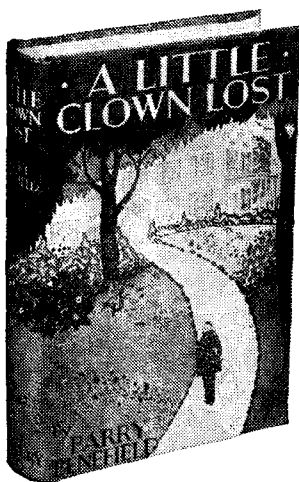
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Dr. Farnell did not press his objection to a division and the proceedings were continued.

When one realizes that the whole business of conferring degrees originated amongst craftsmen, it is deliciously naïve to find a college professor questioning the propriety of a printer being selected for distinction!

Early American Houses

THE Walpole Society has published, in an edition of 175 copies, under the title of "Early American Houses," a lecture delivered at the opening of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Norman Morrison Isham, the well-known Rhode Island architect. It is a pleasant, well-designed octavo volume of sixty odd pages, with thirty-three full page half-tone plates, and a full topical index. Included in the text are many line drawings of building details from American houses and their English prototypes. The book is issued from the Wayside Press at Topsfield, Massachusetts, and is printed in Caslon type. The composition and press-work, although along conventional lines has been handled in a workmanlike fashion.

The purpose of Mr. Isham's lecture was to treat of the actual form of the American house as it developed in plan and construction as well as in exterior and interior treatment, during the seventeenth century along the whole Atlantic coast. Such a survey is of almost melancholy interest in a day when the very word "house" tends to fall into disuse—a domestic habitation is now always a "home"—and cement and asphalt and composition board and "mill trim" have taken the place of the older and simpler and better materials. If "every gentleman should be able to design his own house," such a handbook as this might point the way to more attractive building than now disgraces our countryside. There is something fitting about these seventeenth century buildings which there is not about bungalows and portable houses and pretentious "period" architecture. If our only recent "domestic" architecture of any merit is, as some contend, the better sort of filling stations along our highways, the reason is to be found in the brilliant common-sense which took our early colonial buildings for models.

It is to be regretted that so few will be able to possess this fine guide book. R.

The Limited Edition

ONE of the problems the collector of contemporary authors has at some time to face is that of the limited, signed edition as opposed to the ordinary trade edition—which, if he is conscientious, ought he to have? and does the lack of either one lessen the ultimate value of his collection? It may be, from the publishers' point of view, quite wrong, but there seems no valid reason for believing in the priority of issue of the limited, signed edition in general—printed as it is on large paper which involves an entire resetting of type, it makes necessary a special treatment that, without taking into consideration the length of time needed to obtain the required repetitions of the author's signature, delays the appearance of the book. Possibly, if publishers cared to be accurate, the difficulty might be solved by speaking of a first and second issue of the first edition, but even then, the signed volume would, because of its higher prices, be pushed to the position of prominence without regard for the time of its actual appearance. The trade edition is the form in which the book will be best known to its author and to its readers; and if, by first edition is understood the form of the book itself as it first comes to the hands of its author, nothing else need be considered. It is, after all, the nearest approach possible to the creator's written words. In one particular instance, a limited edition was brought out in this country at least three months after the cheaper trade one had appeared both here and in England: it was extra-illustrated and signed, but the author himself first met his work without the later, added glories. The properly limited edition, that is, a work issued in a definitely limited number of copies, and in no other form, is another matter: in such instances, the collector is helpless and without choice. But why it is essential to pay more than twice the prices charged for the regular edition in order to have Miss Cather's, Mr. Kipling's or Mr. de la Mare's signature in all the elegance of detachment on a leaf somewhere between the half-title and the title-page is beyond the limits of common sense: there is always an uncomfortable suspicion that the publishers are trying to catch the "lovers of fine books" who, because of the price they have paid, feel themselves excused from more intimate acquaintance with their possessions. In a world notable for complications, it is impossible to appreciate, even abstractly, the motives of those American publishers—the soil is almost entirely American—who have attempted fiendishly, in a day of widespread book-collecting, a modernized version of the *édition de luxe* of a simpler era when respectable private libraries went in for sets in uniform bindings, and book collectors were practically unknown. A signed copy of a book has always a certain value, but even more is added when the owner has obtained the signature himself by his own efforts. And for the present, certainly, no one need feel, unless he aims at absolute completeness, and tries to include every variant issue of his especial author, that his collection requires the signed editions that, at the same time, are published in the ordinary trade form—beauty in itself is a treasure, but in book-collecting it seems rather one of the non-essential virtues.

G. C. T.

Hot Weather Miscellany

THE latest addition to the English Republics is Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," reproduced in fac-simile from one of the four existing copies, with certain pages in the original form, which is now in the King's Library in the British Museum.

METHUEN & Co. have issued Heine's "Florentine Nights," Charles G. Leland's translation, in thin quarto form. The illustrations in color by Felix de Gray are nicely drawn and reproduced.