

Books of Special Interest

Big Tops and Blue Sky

GOING TO PIECES. By ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1928. \$2.50.

SAWDUST AND SOLITUDE. By LUCIA ZORA. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HERSCHEL BRICKELL.

MR. WOOLLCOTT wished to become a schoolteacher when he finished college, but the headmaster told him he would have to lick recalcitrant students, and just as that remark was made, several members of the football squad passed by. So Mr. Woolcott became a critic of drama, a safer profession, and in the hands of one with so much zest for the theatre, as for most of the other agreeable trivialities of life, a more varied and attractive one.

If Lucia Zora had wished to be a schoolteacher, the prospect of having to lick recalcitrant students would never in the world have deterred her. Her family craved to have her become a singer; she fell early in love with the circus, and having joined it, soon became an animal trainer, making lions and tigers lie down and roll over, jump through hoops, and occupy adjacent seats without trying to tear each other into tatters. Also she put on an act with the "bulls," otherwise elephants, riding out of the ring on the tusks of the mighty Snyder while he walked sedately along on his hind feet.

What Mr. Woolcott's secret ambition may be there is a chance that we shall learn now that he is taking a vacation from Broadway for a whole year. There was never any doubt about Lucia Zora's innermost yearning. She wanted nothing so much as a home in the country, with her husband, Fred Alispaw, superintendent of the menagerie. All the time she was popping the whip for the big cats and the bigger elephants, she was thinking about a ranch house, with blue sky in place of the gray-white of the "big top."

Her book tells how she got her dream; indeed, it goes too much into detail about her farming operations, because it is the

career as a circus performer that is most entertaining to the rest of us. Why Miss Zora, the daughter of a highly respectable New York State family, and a woman of culture, wished to tame animals is as mysterious as why she wished to be a rancher's wife. But why people choose the careers they do is often as fundamentally puzzling to outsiders, anyway, as the eternal mystery of why they choose the husbands or wives they do.

Aside from all this, Mr. Woolcott's book with its punning title, is a collection of light essays, written with genuine felicity and charm, as agreeable to the mental palate as a soufflé made by a *cordon bleu* is to the physical, and about, it must be said, as nourishing. In addition to the theatre, Mr. Woolcott is interested in croquet, murder, old magazines, Edwin L. James, and gossip.

Miss Zora's book, edited by Courtney Ryley Cooper, once press agent for Miss Zora's own circus, and still able to make gray-haired old wrecks feel the thrill of the circus as they did at the snaggle-toothed age of nine years, has some exciting stuff in its earlier chapters, including a hair-raising description of an elephant stampede during a storm.

In some vague way I suspect there is a connection between the career of a successful dramatic critic and a successful animal-trainer . . . And if Miss Zora finally retired to the peace of a ranch, is not Mr. Woolcott laying plans for a retreat to the solitude of an East River apartment?

Carlyle's Writings

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS CARLYLE'S WRITINGS AND ANA. By ISAAC WATSON DYER. Portland, Maine: The Southworth Press. 1928. \$10.

Reviewed by WALDO H. DUNN
College of Wooster

THIS first important bibliography of Carlyle since Richard Herne Shepherd's in 1881 is the work of a sometime United States Attorney for Maine. It represents the enthusiastic labor of more than forty years. Mr. Dyer's achievement is comparable to Judge John Marshall Gest's recent study of Browning's source, "The Old Yel-

low Book." That two such volumes should within three years be published by busy lawyers is heartening. If America continues to develop professional men of this type we may feel that our cultural future is secure.

The edition consists of six hundred copies beautifully printed on paper of high quality. The arrangement is admirable. The comments which follow the collation of outstanding works make the book far more than a mere catalogue. In addition, Mr. Dyer has had good helpers. J. A. S. Barrett, of Peebles, Scotland, contributes a paper on the principal portraits, statues, busts, and photographs of Carlyle. James L. Caw, Director of the National Galleries of Scotland, furnishes a commentary on Carlyle's portraits. Dr. Charles Frederick Harrold considers the sources for "The French Revolution." Such a work is sure to be useful.

Notwithstanding its many good qualities, the bibliography has serious defects. Many of these arise from prejudice and a closed mind. The author is convinced of Froude's unreliability as biographer of Carlyle, and arrays himself with the followers of Alexander Carlyle. "The whole controversy has been thoroughly threshed out," he writes, "and may be regarded as settled, so far as such disputes ever can be settled." In consequence, he disparages Froude's versions of important matters, and shows little sympathy with those who support Carlyle's chosen biography. He calls David Wilson's "Mr. Froude and Carlyle" "a valuable book on the subject," apparently not recognizing that it is founded on anonymous gossip to such an extent as to be absurd and ridiculous. He refers to Wilson's biography of Carlyle, now in course of publication, as "a reply to and correction of Froude's," and says that it has had "almost unanimous praise from the reviewers." The fact is that Wilson's "Carlyle" exhibits the same defects as his previous books on the subject. When an adequate review of it does appear we shall know that Wilson has made only another contribution to the gaiety of nations.

Furthermore, Mr. Dyer affirms that Moncure Conway's "Autobiography" contains "important corrections" of Froude, not knowing how untrustworthy Conway's statements are. He refers approvingly to Sir James Crichton-Browne's extravagant criticisms of Froude, seemingly unaware that at the time of Sir James's entrance into the discussion the leading medical journals of Great Britain denounced his methods most severely. "The flame of controversy has unhappily been fanned by the wild incursion into the matter of perhaps the most injudicious writer of the present day," wrote the editor of the *Medical Times and Hospital Gazette*, July 4, 1903, in dismissing Crichton-Browne's part in the controversy. Mr. Dyer speaks also of Norwood Young's recent book as "a savage attack on Carlyle's character and writings . . . of slight, if any, value." Young's volume cannot, however, be dismissed thus lightly. Indeed, it is a study which is compelling a reappraisal of Carlyle.

For the most part Mr. Dyer merely repeats the old charges advanced by Froude's enemies. Thus he remarks: "Carlyle firmly intended, to destroy the love letters which passed between him and Miss Welsh before their marriage, so sacred did he hold them. His desire was frustrated by the letters being displaced." He does not know that documentary evidence exists which entirely disproves Alexander Carlyle's story that had Mary Carlyle known what her uncle's wishes in regard to the letters were Froude would never have seen them. As I am just on the point of publishing the results of my study of the Froude-Carlyle controversy, I shall not here speak at greater length of the many errors which Mr. Dyer's bibliography helps to perpetuate.

Finally, I regret to find careless errors of typography and many deplorable omissions. A bibliography is satisfactory and valuable so far as it is a dependable guide to all important material. It is one thing to prepare an incomplete bibliography; quite another to prepare one that is definitive. I can refer to only a few omissions by way of example. There is no reference to the very important "Letters of Edward Fitzgerald to Fanny Kemble." Four indispensable articles which appeared in the medical press of Great Britain during 1903 are not listed. Of the half dozen letters which Froude and Mary Carlyle sent to the *London Times* in 1881 only one is catalogued. There is no reference to the long editorial in the *Times* of May 9, 1881, although it is unusually significant.

Thankful we must always be to Mr. Dyer for the faithful labor and devotion he has put into this volume. I turn from it, however, with regret that so good a book was not made better.

The Guests of Alexander of Macedon

Edited by F. P. MAGOUN, JR.

Professor Magoun here offers a modern edition of two Middle-English poems on the legendary history of Alexander the Great, written by unknown early contemporaries of Chaucer; the main title of the book is based on the manuscript title of the first fragment. In the Introduction he sets forth an outline of the growth and development of the Alexander legend as it springs from the Alexandrine Greek novel of the Pseudo-Callisthenes. Of special value to the student of mediæval literature are the ample bibliographies. \$3.50 a copy.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
PRESS

2 RANDALL HALL,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

By the Author of "Disraeli"

A Voyage to

THE ISLAND of the ARTICOLES

By André Maurois. A delicious satire on the literary and artistic worlds. Illustrated. \$1.50.

MANY DEVICES

By Roselle Mercier Montgomery. A new book of verse possessing a lilt and rhythm that unfailingly sings its way into the heart. It has a winning honesty of sentiment and graceful humor. \$2.00

THE HUNTING OF THE BUFFALO

By E. Douglas Branch. The epic story of the mighty buffalo. An absorbing picture of a little known phase of the old West. Illustrated. \$3.00.

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS OF JOHN BUNYAN

Arranged by Wilton Rix. A dramatic version in Bunyan's own words that makes impressive reading and is very actable. \$1.25.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
35 West 32nd Street - New York

"the most important English history since Green", JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS

THE HISTORY of BRITISH CIVILIZATION

ESMÉ WINGFIELD-STRATFORD

From English Critics

The Times Literary Supplement. "What he offers is an absorbing exhibition of the English spirit in its development. He has vision, and he makes us share it. Touch by touch he builds up his skilful portraiture of the English. . . . The high merit of the book is that it gives the impression of an epic."

Daily News. "Continuity of narrative is the essence of good historical composition; this book is a 'story' from first to last. . . . Its outlook is wider than political. . . ."—D. C. SOMERVELL.

Sunday Times. "He has produced a book which is entirely enjoyable from its first page to its last. The level strength, the unfailing force, vivacity and picturesqueness of his style are things to marvel at; they would have aroused the cordial admiration of Macaulay, Froude, and Carlyle."—HENRY MURRAY.

Two Volumes.

\$12.00

HARCOURT, BRACE & COMPANY



THE WANDERER

More and more American readers are discovering this great French novel by Alain-Fournier.

"It is romance and magic and yearning and all those flashing things that only the adolescent sees."
—Frederic Van de Water in the *New York Post*.

\$2.50
(Houghton Mifflin Co.)

THE FIRST GREAT NOVEL OF THE NEW YEAR



PEDER VICTORIOUS

"A MOST eloquent story. A fine, well-modulated tale, letting us look into the minds of these people and their minor tragedies and achievements, adding a sense of continuing life. There is authenticity on every page. When the chronicles of the Middle West are collected the Rolvaag books will have a prominent place among them."—*Harry Hansen in the New York World*

*The New Novel
by the Author of
GIANTS IN
THE EARTH*

"THERE is more humor and pathos in this book, and the same simple vigor of narrative that made 'Giants in the Earth' notable. The boy Peder is the new hero and the theme passes from pioneering to Americanization."

—*Henry Seidel Canby*

"The reality, the truth of Rolvaag's work, is beyond question."

—*New York Times*

O. E. ROLVAAG

FIRST LOVE

By E. M. DELAFIELD

Author of "Jill" and "The Way Things Are"

"Ellie is a nearly perfect figure of bewildered real love. I hope for their own enjoyment that more and more people will 'discover' E. M. Delafield."—*Anne Parrish*

\$2.50

SHADOWED!

By HILAIRE BELLOC

With 37 drawings by G. K. Chesterton

"A wildly funny detective story."—*London Times*
"The drawings alone are worth the money."—*London Daily Sketch*

\$2.50

"IT is difficult to realize that any man can write two novels in succession that are really masterpieces. But the author of 'Peder Victorious' has done so. I thought he would never approach 'Giants in the Earth,' but he has unquestionably repeated his success in 'Peder Victorious.' It is a wonderful picture, and nothing short of a second masterpiece."—*Edward W. Bok*

\$2.50 EVERYWHERE

PROCESSION

By FANNIE HURST

Author of "A President Is Born"

New stories by one of America's finest writers, in which the author's zest for life is subjected to the exquisite restraint of her craftsmanship. \$2.00

MUSIC AT MIDNIGHT

By MURIEL DRAPER

The fascinating story of Mrs. Draper's house in London, the rendezvous of Sargent, Norman Douglas, Chaliapin, Henry James and other artistic Titans. \$3.50

By the Author of WHY WE BEHAVE LIKE HUMAN BEINGS

THE HOWS AND WHYS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

By GEORGE A. DORSEY

"IN his new book George Dorsey has touched us all where we live. Some of the things he says may hurt. But he heals the hurt with medicine and not with magic. No one who reads

the book can ever afterwards be swelled up with his own importance. The book goes a long way towards making human beings of all of us."—*John B. Watson*

\$3.50

HARPER & BROTHERS • PUBLISHERS

49 EAST 33RD STREET • NEW YORK • N. Y.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
See Harpers magazine for Complete School Directory
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Lessing Bi-Centennial

By KUNO FRANCKE
Harvard University

THE lonely uncompromising man, the two hundredth anniversary of whose birth will, like a national holiday, be acclaimed on January 22nd by multitudes of Germans, was a shining example of how barrenness of surroundings and limitation of perspective may be turned into incentives for achievement and intense inner activity.

There was next to nothing in the Germany of Lessing's time that helped to inspire him. At no period of his life did he have a social background worthy of his intellectual distinction. Not only the young critic, but even the mature and undisputed master of the drama was in constant and often desperate financial straits. By Frederick the Great, whose mental and moral stature no other writer of his generation came so near attaining, he was deliberately ignored and neglected. During the very years when in his "Nathan" and "The Education of the Human Race" he reached the climax of constructive thought, he was confined to the walls of a sleepy provincial library which made him feel that he was doomed "to rot among musty tomes." The abiding character of Lessing's contribution to modern culture is intimately connected with this contrast between his innermost striving and the impediment of milieu, mental make-up, and training.

As an art critic Lessing was handicapped by his scholastic aloofness from truly great works of art either ancient or modern. None of the plastic masterpieces from which Winckelmann drew his insight into Greek beauty of form, he knew in the original. He shared the blind rationalistic contempt of his contemporaries for Gothic architecture. He had no eye for color and no real appreciation of the Italian Renaissance. He utterly failed to understand the great Dutch painters. What is it which in spite of all these defects makes his "Laocoon" a source of artistic inspiration even to-

day? It is the strictly logical insistence upon suggestiveness as the necessary element of all art. By sheer reasoning, without any instinctive feeling either for poetry or the fine arts, Lessing was led to discover the essential aberration in two prevailing tendencies of the literature and the art of his time: the over-elaborateness of description in baroque poetry and the overcrowding of motifs in rococo sculpture. He thereby struck at the root of the heaviness and unsuggestiveness of most of the literary and artistic production of his age. But he also established thereby an esthetic principle of universal significance. For he clearly saw that true art, whether poetry, or sculpture, or painting, should stimulate the imagination, should set the mind free, should lead not to a passive and vacant staring at things, but to a widening and heightening of inner self-activity. Thus this seemingly cold rationalist became the precursor of romantic feeling and emotional rhythm. And we may well invoke his name in the present-day struggle for self-expression and the life of the soul in art.

Similar things might be said about Lessing's dramatic criticism. Most of the plays analyzed with such acumen and wit in his "Hamburgische Dramaturgie" seem hardly worth the keen attention which he bestows upon them. What gives to his treatment of these conventional French dramas and their German imitations permanent value is that by these artificial and unnatural productions he exemplifies *e contrario* what natural and genuine feeling is. When he amuses his readers by showing how a supposedly tragic hero dies "of nothing but the Fifth Act," when he ridicules the ghost in Voltaire's "Semiramis," when he represents Corneille's "Rodogune" as a monstrosity rather than a thing of grandeur, we feel that his negations after all are only the reverse side of the positive endeavor to

clear the ground for what is truly tragic, great, and human. And by his emphasis upon the free and grand outline of Shakespearean characters, and above all by his enlightened, though historically incorrect, interpretation of the Aristotelian theory of tragic emotions, he gives to the drama and particularly to tragedy a fuller meaning and a deeper purpose—the purpose of holding before us in concentrated form a comprehensive and high ideal of humanity and thereby revolutionizing, reshaping, and refining our whole spiritual life. In the age of Ibsen, Hauptmann, and Shaw this conception of the drama hardly needs additional corroboration.

The dramatist Lessing has suffered from the attempt, by indiscreet admirers, to place him on a plane with Shakespeare. There is indeed nothing Shakespearean in his temperament. The poet's "divine frenzy" was entirely alien to him. None of his dramatic characters are instinctive growths. They are all consciously made. They are all parts of his intellectual striving; and as such they belong to the whole scientific trend of European culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The wonder is that this keen scientific observer by deliberate choice should have been able to create characters of intense and striking individuality. What makes his Tellheim and Minna, his Odoardo and Emilia, his Nathan and Saladin truly living beings and gives them power to stir audiences of the twentieth century is that they all are embodiments of Lessing's own vivid consciousness of the moral responsibility of the individual. They are all symbols of the spiritual self-regeneration of Germany which from disintegration of the Thirty Years War and the tyranny of princely absolutism, through cultivation of the inner self, finally led to the cosmopolitan joyousness of the golden days of Weimar.

What finally about Lessing, the religious and philosophical thinker? Here perhaps, we see him most conspicuously lifted above the limitations of his time. To be sure, he shared with the age of Rationalism a probably exaggerated esteem for the purely intellectual. He lacked "the sense of awe,"

the chief source of religious inspiration. His ideal of an all-embracing, all-tolerant world union of enlightened individuals was perhaps too vague and abstract to satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. But can there be any doubt about the universal value, the eternally invigorating quality of his conception of truth seeking? The search for truth was to him not a mere process of finding out facts, it was a living principle of moral and spiritual growth. In his own ever memorable words: "Not the truth in the possession of which a man is or believes himself to be, but the sincere striving to arrive at the truth makes the worth of a man. Possession makes him indolent, inert, haughty. Striving alone widens and strengthens his being. And in striving alone lies the assurance of his ever growing perfection." Here Lessing, the hard-headed critic, the penetrating observer of the actual, turns into a believer in undemonstrable verities, into a Faust-like prophet of infinite progress toward the divine. It is a fitting climax to his career that the last words of his last essay should deal with the ascent of the spirit to ever new and higher transformations of individual life. "Why should I not return as often as I have become fit to acquire new insights and new powers? Did I acquire in one life so much that it would not seem worth the trouble to come again? Is not all eternity mine?"

Well may the Germany of to-day, defeated, cramped, and oppressed, take courage and pride in this sturdy and victorious fighter for spiritual progress and liberty. But his message is not for Germany alone, but for all nations.

Confusion

THE DEVIL'S SHADOW. By FRANK THIESS. Translated from the German by H. T. LOWE-PORTER. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN HYDE PRESTON

ONE of the younger German novelists, Frank Thiess belongs to the sad, torn generation that has grown up with fast eyes on a renaissance of the youth of Germany, and seems still in treacherous, under-eddied waters.

His book is typical of the German outlook, date 1928. Ten years since the last booming of cannons. There is hope, youth, a tumult of ambitions—colliding. But values are shot to tatters; standards are running crazily on the rim; morals are as unsteady as sane mental balances. The age of gasoline and wasted time. The age of money and orgies. The age of stale perfumery. Everything balancing on the grim edge. And hope . . . and youth . . . meantime . . . for a little. The sensation to be had from a reading of "The Devil's Shadow" is one of an exotically lighted room, full of rank cigar smoke, the click of chips, and beautifully dressed women.

Caspar Müller, the principal figure, is a good-looking milksop with artistic longings of a vague sort, a mania for fame, and a mania for women. He tries the stage, and fizzles, having already fizzled in everything else attempted. Then he tries journalism, and fizzles again. He tries to keep a mistress, and loses her. He tries to fall in love with a neurotic, fear-obsessed young girl, and begins to have dangerous nightmares. Life goes on, writhing, foaming; it is a foam that is greatly scum. He gets into serious trouble, and wriggles out, again and again; but trouble leaves its impress on his mind. Finally he emerges from the awful dream, married to a frilly, wild young woman, his artistic leanings quite gone out upon thin air, his mind contorted—and Caspar off to America on a mission of business.

Herr Thiess is doubtless a faithful artist. He is merciless, and it is right that he should be. He seems to have no sympathy with this spineless, whirling, obsessed generation he belongs to; it is the inevitable lumber of the German mind, he says, that has weighed all down.

He makes his case pretty clear. But the translator has been too literal; he has missed the spirit of both context and the style. The book is ajar with verbal absurdities.

A Suggestion

To get the reading habit: Buy a trough bookcase that will sit by the chair you most frequently use, or your bed, or your desk. Keep in this the books you are reading, the titles just under your eye, and carry on with your reading whenever you have half an hour's leisure.



IDA A.R.
WYLIE

Writes a daring and beautiful and tender story that separates love into its component parts of passion and loyalty.

The SILVER VIRGIN



"A poignant book, tenderly told."—ISA GLENN

Doubleday Doran

\$2.50 net

