

## Points of View

### Literary Volsteadism

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

A gentleman of Pittsburgh University complained in your issue of April 20th of the "moral arrogance" behind a Government policy which prohibited the importation for his university's library of the works of John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester. He invites an inquiry into this "literary volsteadism."

The gentleman probably has not read Ernst's and Slagle's "To the Pure," quite an exhaustive treatise of literary censorship in the United States.

Section 305 of the Tariff Act of 1922 makes it unlawful to import any obscene book, pamphlet, picture. Another section provides a penalty. Worse, the entire package which contains one "obscene" book may be seized. For instance, "Droll Stories" happens to be on the Customs list of prohibited books. If Balzac's complete works, including the "Droll Stories," is attempted to be imported, the whole consignment may be confiscated under the law. So with the works of Pierre Louys, George Moore, Ovid, Aristophanes. On the forbidden list are the "Decameron," works of Rabelais, "Lysistrata," Dr. Burton's "Arabian Nights," George Moore's "Daphnis and Chloe."

The genesis of this law is described in "To the Pure." New York vice agents travelled to Washington with their bags bulging with obscene photographs and drawings seized in the course of their activities among the lewd, and with this exhibit they succeeded in persuading the moral legislators in Congress to pass a blanket law against anything in print that might be construed obscene.

The law does not define obscenity, or set its limits or grade, as applied to books, nor does it establish a standard or criterion, except the judgment of the official who may be designated to examine the books at the

port of entry. Even his qualification is trustfully left to his superior. In the recent trial before a sitting of the United States Customs Court at Baltimore on the obscenity of George Moore's translation of "Daphnis and Chloe," the Customs inspector who had seized the book did not know whether Chaucer was dead or still living and defined obscenity as "vile language."

Because of the recent date of the Tariff Act of 1922, there is but one recorded judicial decision on the question of obscenity under Section 305, and that in the Casanova case. The United States Customs Court held that Machen's translation of the Memoirs of Casanova is obscene.

Before the same Court is pending the question whether the works of Pierre Louys are obscene. Three volumes, not illustrated, mailed to the present writer, were held by the local Customs Collector and the Washington Customs Bureau to be subject to seizure. He appealed to the Customs Court on the ground that the law is invalid for indefiniteness and is confiscatory without due process of law.

To the layman innocent of legal sophistries the knowledge that the same books, the importation of which is prohibited, may be obtained from American publishers through almost any bookseller or even a department store inspires a profound disgust for a law so obviously inconsistent. The sinister inference is plain. Whatever may have been the original intent of the law, its effect is to give a complete protection to the American industry in certain books against foreign competition, thereby cleaving these books into a distinct disreputable class subversive of their real intent and merit.

This phenomenon may be taken as another little proof of the inevitable curtailment of individual liberty by a democracy. Adults are not considered in an attempt to make literature safe for the child mind.

ADAM S. GREGORIUS.

Baltimore, Md.



Conducted by MARION PONSONBY

### Summer-Time

THE unprecedented flood of children's books through the season of 1928-29 is a thing of the past, and now, along with our mighty neighbors, the publishers, the booksellers, and the authors, we can draw a long breath. However, the growing sentiment for more leisurely all-year-round publishing is already sending a fresh rivulet of juveniles into the market, in most cases really good books which even last year would have been reserved until the fall. Therefore we cannot shut up shop altogether as we did last summer. We have decided upon compromise measures: we shall cut ourselves, not too painfully, in half, running two columns instead of our usual four, until September and the new flood.

Along with necessary reviewing we see the chance to do something for which we could not find space during the past months. Lists galore are always being published, but too often without application to the more human and broadening fields of interest. Why stick to ages and sizes and seasonal events when the youthful intellect could be gently and delightfully led outward? We were full of eagerness to publish, for instance, lists of collateral reading by countries, or periods, or both. We went for advice to Miss Bertha E. Mahony, of "The Bookshop for Boys and Girls" in Boston, to find that she had in preparation in list-form just the wisely selected, individually chosen material we had dimly envisioned! Now "Realms of Gold," by Miss Mahony and Miss Elinor Whitney, author of "Tod of the Fens," is out. And we have permission from authors and publishers (Doubleday, Doran & Company) to present lists from its fascinating pages.

The lists of collateral historical reading which we have selected from "Realms of Gold" for our Summer "Bookshop" will stand in convenient isolation for travellers, returned travellers, and anyone who wishes education not machine-made for children. We have chosen for our first instalment an introductory list of "world histories and related books." Then, regretfully passing over "prehistory" and "the ancient world" (for not so many people visit caves or go to Greece) we shall come squarely upon "the Middle Ages," dividing the pages of the book on this period into four sections to fit our remaining summer numbers. This method of presentation is not fair to the interrelations of the lists, but this we cannot help. . . . We count it a privilege to be able to lead our readers down these "Roads to the Past" into the many other broad fields of interest to be found in "Realms of Gold." We shall begin to publish the lists in the next Bookshop. Today we present a review of the book from which they are taken.

### Reviews

REALMS OF GOLD IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS. By BERTHA E. MAHONY and ELINOR WHITNEY. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1929. \$5 net.

Reviewed by PADRAIC COLUM

THIS is a Baedeker to the country of children's books. Like the good Baedeker it gives us a sense of competence and completeness in survey; it gives us, too, that sense of richness and variety that is a prompting to travel. It abounds in items of interest. Thus, when the "Selborne" of Gilbert White is mentioned, we have this quotation. "So modest was he, indeed, and so careless of fame that no portrait now exists of him, and only a few particulars can with difficulty be gleaned about a man whose letters have probably been reprinted in a greater number of editions than those of any other English worthy." We have the Brothers Grimm's comment on their researches: it shows how much of the German national spirit was behind a collection that brings back our childhood to so many of us. "We strove to penetrate into the wild forests of our ancestors, listening to their noble language, watching their pure customs, recognizing their ancient freedom and hearty faith." And I am glad to have this item of interest with regard to Paul Du Chaillu, the first of the explorer-storytellers; besides being the first European to look

upon a gorilla and study such creatures' habits, I learn that he "stuffed more than two thousand species of birds."

Not all the books listed in "Realms of Gold in Children's Books" belong to what would be conventionally regarded as children's reading. I find amongst the titles given in these 727 pages "Peruvian Fabrics" and "Peruvian Textiles," published by the American Museum of Natural History. It is a mark of wisdom on the part of Bertha Mahony and Elinor Whitney to recognize that the fabrics of the Incas have a place in the realms of gold in children's books—a presentation of such work would probably do more to stir the imagination of children of a certain type than many books of ordinary stories. And, after all, the telling of a story is just for the stirring of the imagination. "Unhappily," declares Anatole France in sentences very aptly quoted in this book:

Unhappily there are a great many elements abroad who look upon the imagination with mistrust. They are wrong! For she it is who sows the seeds of Beauty and Virtue up and down the world. She alone leads to greatness. Never, O ye mothers, never fear that she will injure your children. Rather will she hold them safe from vulgar faults and facile errors.

"Realms of Gold in Children's Books" is full, but it is by no means indiscriminate. It is excellent in its selection of material and editorship. An entertaining book to go through, it gives just the sort of information that is looked for by those who are giving children some training in literature—information, for instance, about the Homeric epics, about Charlemagne, about King Arthur, about the Indian epics and the Irish legendary material, and the folk and heroic traditions of various peoples. And there are lots and lots of pictures through the pages: indeed, I know of no fine illustrator of children's books who has not specimens of his or her pictures reproduced in "Realms of Gold in Children's Books."

A LITTLE BOOK OF NECESSARY NONSENSE. Compiled by BURGESS JOHNSON. Illustrated by ELIZABETH MACKINSTRY. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1929. \$1.

Reviewed by KATHARINE WARD SEITZ

THIS is an admirable collection of the nonsense verse which children should know and enjoy along with serious poetry. It opens with Thisbe's speech from the "Midsummer Night's Dream," ranges through Gilbert and Edward Lear, and concludes with Gelett Burgess. Elizabeth MacKinsty's illustrations are particularly suited to the text. They have all the qualities of a good limerick, being inconsequential yet apt, fantastic and yet filled with a curious reasonableness. Her "Father William" is certainly standing on his head, but with what balance, with what an air of permanence and satisfaction! The whole volume is an application of the text that a first-rate book need not be solemn, nor an entertaining one second-rate. It should be particularly successful with children from eleven years old onward who need some urging towards the reading of poetry.

### Good But Forgotten

We have advanced beyond the day when girls' books were distinguishable from boys' books. Our enthusiasm for this advance is apt to go hand in hand with a wholesale repudiation of the books of yesterday. A search among them, however, reveals some books that, though written just for little girls, are not insipid. "The Live Dolls," by Josephine Scribner Gates (Bobbs-Merrill), which is an account of how on a certain June morning all of the dolls in the village of Cloverdale came alive, with many pictures made at the time by Virginia Keep, sparkles with imagination; the dolls who come alive are little character sketches of human children; and a bit of philosophy is expressed by the episode which must end in the return of the dolls to their original status. The illustrations are the more charming for being old-fashioned and for depicting dolls with long hair.

## SKIP a PARAGRAPH and MISS an EXPERIENCE

PERHAPS *Wolf Solent* has been praised too much. A few critics and undoubtedly some readers have approached this novel with misgivings because its author, JOHN COWPER POWYS, has been so generally compared with the immortals.

Edward Garnett, noted British man of letters, and perhaps the first discoverer of JOSEPH CONRAD, says that Powys is an English DOSTOEVSKI and ranks *Wolf Solent* with the best of *Thomas Hardy*. Theodore Dreiser calls the book an enduring treasure, like *Wuthering Heights*. Will Durant declares that he has not read any book so well written since ANATOLE FRANCE and THOMAS HARDY. Seeking standards of comparison, scores of reviewers have fallen back on POE, TOLSTOY, WORDSWORTH, SHAKESPEARE, and SOPHOCLES! So lavish, so superlative have been the tributes that *The Inner Sanctum* has not dared to quote them all, for fear of courting incredulity and skepticism.

Acclaim may defeat its own purpose if it frightens readers by its forbidding and titanic allusions. By contrast, a simple direct expression from a typical reader will perhaps carry more conviction. For this reason, in the midst of a chorus of praise such as rarely greeted a modern novel, a modest seven-word tribute to *Wolf Solent* from a lay critic gave *The Inner Sanctum* perhaps the most gratifying assurance of all. It came in a letter from England and stated simply: "Skip a paragraph and miss an experience."



*Wolf Solent* has had other obstacles besides the raptures of its admirers. It is a two volume book. It sells for five dollars. It is a work of 966 pages. The title is not alluring. But all these difficulties *Wolf Solent* has overcome in glorious fashion. Misgivings have become surprises, skepticism has turned to exclamations of delight. Readers have come to wonder and remained to praise.

*Wolf Solent* is already a best-seller of the first magnitude. Three large printings have been required in four weeks and the book is selling better every week, giving evidence of joining that rare aristocracy of best-sellers which is marked for the years. To sense the reason for this extraordinary phenomenon, the reader need only go to his bookseller and turn to the first paragraph of the first page of the first volume. . . . The rest is literature. . . . Skip a paragraph and miss an experience.

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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

ETHER AND ME, OR "JUST RELAX." By WILL ROGERS. Putnams. 1929. \$1.

This amusing little trifle is the high-spirited Mr. Rogers's record of an operation for gall stones performed upon him in Los Angeles, an operation much like other operations, but which under its chronicler's skilful handling takes on a humorous character. Those who themselves have undergone operations or passed through the ordeal of seeing others off to the operating table and through the preliminary examinations that lead to it will smile with reminiscent indulgence at the qualms and misgivings that assailed him.

THE PRIVACY AGENT. By Bernard K. Sandwell. Dutton. \$3.

CHRYSLID. Grand Rapids: Mount Mercy Academy.

PAPERS ON SHELLEY AND WORDSWORTH AND OTHERS. By J. A. Chapman. Oxford University Press. \$2.25.

### Biography

NOLLEKENS AND HIS TIMES. By John Thomas Smith. Oxford University Press. 80 cents.

REMINISCENCES OF OUTDOOR LIFE. By William Kent. San Francisco: Robertson. \$3.

LEAVES FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF A TAMED CYNIC. By Reinhold Niebuhr. Willett, Clark & Colby. \$2.

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE. By the ex-Duchesse de Clermont Tonnerre. Cape-Smith.

MEMOIRS OF CAPTAIN CARLETON. Dutton. \$5.

MEMOIRS OF AN OLD PARLIAMENTARIAN. By T. P. O'Connor. Appleton. 2 vols. \$10.

THE DIARY OF A RUM RUNNER. By Alastair Moray. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.

THE DIARY OF JÖRG VON EHINGEN. Translated and edited by Malcolm Letts. Oxford University Press. \$6.

THE STORMY LIFE OF MIRABEAU. By Henry de Jouvenel. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.50.

STEPHEN HALES. By A. E. Clark-Kennedy. Cambridge University Press (Macmillan).

### Fiction

DANCING BEGGARS. By ERIC BRETT YOUNG. Lippincott. 1929. \$2.

In Polblaze, on the Cornish coast, Dominic Bently, a millionaire by inference, was murdered. The "how" and the "why" (a matter of some 300 pages),—you can discover for yourself.

Categorically speaking, then, "Dancing Beggars" is just another detective story. But it is something more than that. The conventional tools, terror and fear, are not used by Mr. Young to freeze your blood. He will freeze it, it is true, but not with the witchcraft of incubus or ghoul.

His machinery is more strictly germane to the novel of character than it is to the detective story. By using plausible instead of specious reality Mr. Young gives a more forceful punch to his story than he could have delivered had he followed the rusty, unnatural methods of his less ingenious confrères.

As a result, "Dancing Beggars" can be enjoyed aside from its detective ground-plan. Mrs. Lupin, the novelist; Molly, the suspect; John Gosling, the kindly curate of Polblaze; his friend Janes, the amateur sleuth; obviously, all of them were created to tighten the inevitable inquisition that follows a murder. But thanks to the author's neat portraiture and gracious prose, they exist as personable entities apart from the designs they subserve.

"Dancing Beggars" is considerably more than a good detective story . . . it is a good novel.

THE JEFFERSON SECRET. By RICHARD BLAKER. Doubleday, Doran. 1929. \$2.

Mild mystery for those who do not like murder is furnished in the latest novel by Richard Blaker. It is doubtful if the real mystery addict will care much for this crimeless account of a lost formula, but there are many readers who enjoy being a bit puzzled by their fiction yet have little taste for the gory propensities of current thrillers. "The Jefferson Secret" will be just to their liking. Mr. Blaker definitely rejects the tried and true recipe for a mystery—"Take one or more murders and a detective," et cetera, and is content to do his juggling with the formula for Jefferson steel which is worth any number of times its weight in radium. Counterfeits of the formula are constantly being unearthed in telltale blue envelopes but the author succeeds in keeping dark the whereabouts of the authentic document until some villainy and more matchmaking has been accomplished and all is ready for the dénouement.

THE MASQUERADERS. By GEORGETTE HEYER. Longmans, Green. 1929. \$2.

Here is a gay romance of days of old when the two Merriots, brother and sister, finding themselves implicated in the Stuart Rebellion and in some danger as to their necks, took most willingly to masquerade. Robin Merriot addressed himself to ladies' clothes and managed his hoopskirt and high heels almost as well as, when not in masquerade, he managed his horse and sword. The sister, Prudence, donned cavaliers' costume with much Mechlin lace and had a very jolly time of it indeed what with duels and ruffians and lovers and what not. The father of this versatile pair more than accounts for their cleverness and daring. He had scattered his own masquerades all down the years. Even at the end of the book (as full of lovers interlace and riches raining down as such a story should be) the elder Merriot casts a speculative glance upon the future. The young Merriots may have finished with disguises but one suspects Merriot père of being a chronic masquerader. The tale is told rapidly and wittily with events bombarding events and one encounter invariably leading to another. The characters are gaily bedight and they manage to be clever or dull just as each occasion demands for the furtherance of the good-natured, swashbuckling plot.

### Miscellaneous

WHERE PARIS DINES. By JULIAN STREET. Doubleday, Doran. 1929. \$2.50 net.

Those who from the distance of America smile with superiority upon the earnestness with which their travelling friends search out the restaurants and tea-rooms of Europe once they themselves get abroad are apt to find themselves following the trail of gastronomic excellence with as much eagerness as the friends they deride. For all those who wish to know where to dine in Paris both wisely and well this book by Julian Street should prove an invaluable *vade mecum*. Mr. Street knows his Paris on both banks, he has dined and wined in the fashionable and the unfashionable, the expensive and the inexpensive restaurant alike, he has been at much pains to check up his impressions, and he has gathered together interesting material bearing upon the places he describes. His material is grouped in such fashion as to make it easily available to different needs, is enlivened by anecdote and incident, and is supplemented by a vocabulary and indices arranged alphabetically and according to districts.

### Travel

FLYING WITH LINDBERGH. By DONALD KEYHOE. Putnams. 1928. \$2.50.

The millions of words that have been printed about Lindbergh, since he landed at Le Bourget last year have only made him more of an enigma to his worshipping public. As but few have been able to penetrate his cool reserve, he has sometimes been pictured as scarcely human. Donald Keyhoe, assistant to the Chief of Bureau of Aeronautics, Lindbergh's aide on the 20,000 mile American tour in the interests of aviation, had the enviable opportunity to come to know him, during those three months, not as Colonel Lindbergh, air hero, but simply as "Slim," fun-loving ex-mail pilot. Further, Mr. Keyhoe has been able to convey to the reader, in his always interesting narrative, the *real* Lindbergh, so little known to most of us.

To be sure, flying across forty-eight States is not quite the same as flying the Atlantic, still it was not lacking in thrills. The greatest good to come from this tour is doubtless the fact that Lindbergh, to prove that air travel is dependable, arrived everywhere on schedule time—with but one exception. And the tour, as Mr. Keyhoe says, was as much a test of Lindbergh as the New York-Paris hop. His chief concern was always for the safety of the throngs at airports; he never landed until he had assured himself the people would be far enough from his propellor. This book explains the occasional reports during the tour that Lindbergh was lost; he left one place earlier than scheduled to have time for a little lone exploring and still arrived at the next city at the expected hour. In this way the Spirit of St. Louis covered 22,000 miles as against the 20,000 of the accompanying party.

ON THE HIGH SEAS. By E. Koble Chatterton. Lippincott. \$5.



"A full-fledged nautical classic."  
—Lincoln Colcord

## FALMOUTH FOR ORDERS

By A. J. VILLIERS

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A Man  
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