

## 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*.

THE book that I promised, some months ago, would make any company laugh—and then forgot which book it was—has been identified. E. M. S., Department of History, College for Women, Cleveland, writes:

"Though doubtless others geographically nearer you have given the same information long since, I haste to say that one book you guaranteed to send an audience into gales of laughter if casually read, was A. P. Herbert's 'She-Shanties' (Doubleday, Doran), and truer word was never spoken. On your recommendation I gave it to a professorial family for a steamer present, and they treated a boat-load to hysterics with it, and kept it in their hand-luggage for the entire trip, in case of blues over English cooking, or the French language, or anything. And retaliated by giving another copy to me for a steamer present the next year, which was not unappreciated, only, going alone. I couldn't take it with me, because it was too devastating not to have anyone to read choice bits to. So I left it with the family, and they said it was much more entertaining summer company than I would have been."

I trust that the above will meet the eye of Mr. Herbert and bring to his ear echoes of happy laughter following a book of verse two years old and five thousand miles away. I have another cause for gratitude to Mr. Herbert, his novel "The Old Flame," which I did not read until it appeared this summer reprinted as one of half a dozen books bound together in the omnibus "Week End Library" (Doubleday, Doran). "The Old Flame" has the only hero who divides his time between a garden in Mortlake and a study in Chelsea. As the book was mailed to my Chelsea study and read in the garden at Mortlake, I could appreciate an author's good sense in choosing such a combination of abodes.

E. R. L. B., Uniontown, Pa., has been told that there have been eight replies to Katherine Mayo's "Mother India" (Harcourt, Brace), and asks for their names.

THEY are "Father India," by C. S. Ranga Iyer (London, 1927: Selwyn & Blount); "A Son of Mother India Answers," by D. G. Mukerji (Dutton, 1928); "Sister India," by World Citizen (Bombay, 1928: Sister India Office); "India: Its Character, A Reply to Mother India," by J. A. Chapman (Oxford, 1928: Basil Blackwood); "Miss Mayo's Mother India, A Rejoinder," by K. Natarajan (Madras, 1928: G. A. Natesan); "Unhappy India," by Lajpat Rai, (Calcutta, 1928: Banna Publishing Company); "Mother India Ka Jawab," by Mrs. C. Lakanpal (Dehradun, India, 1928: Gurukula Press); "Mother India Aur Uska Jawab," Srimati Uma Nehru, published by Kashinath Bajpai, T. Rayag Street, Allahabad, India.

Then there are a pile of pamphlets such as "Reply to Mother India: Indian & British Leaders' Views," price 6d, published by The Indian News Service, 143/4 Fleet Street, London, E. C. 4, and others published in India and elsewhere. These, however, cannot be counted as books. Some have called Zimand's "Living India," (Longmans, N. Y.) "A Reply," but the author does not say so. Similarly many reviewers have proclaimed Gertrude M. Williams's "Understanding India" to be an answer to Miss Mayo, but, again, the author does not say so.

D. B., Blakely, Ga., noticing that W. L. K., Lesterville, S. D., asks for the best history of the Civil War from a Southern standpoint and the best history of Southern prison camps in the war, writes: "Perhaps I can be of some help, for I have a copy of Miss Mildred Rutherford's 'Scrap Books' in which she names a number of books dealing with the South and the war between the states, books which she had read and recommended for their truthfulness and adherence to facts. Miss Rutherford, who died a few months ago, lived during the war, and gave her entire life to fighting for the truth in history, especially in regard to the history of her beloved South. Of late years she was recognized in her work and a number of universities, both in and out of the South, obtained all of her works for their libraries. I was under 'Miss Millie,' as she is called, at school, and she told us that she had been accused of meddlesomeness and keeping dead issues alive, but that she

had always been recognized for telling the truth in history.

"You see, after the war, the southern men were busy rebuilding, and had no time to write histories. So the most of them were written by northern men who, in the majority of cases, knew little or nothing about the South, or the southern side of the question, and who largely based their books on the propaganda and prejudice that were current at the time. And these books have since served for references. 'Miss Millie' gives the southern side, and backs up her statements with references which may be consulted by anybody. I am glad that W. L. K. is interested in knowing our side.

"For him, as well as for others who are interested, will you be so kind as to print in your section, the following titles?—

"The War Between the States," by Alexander H. Stephens; 'Facts and Falsehoods Concerning the War on the South,' sold by A. R. Taylor & Co. (56 cents); Miss Rutherford's 'Scrap Book,' Vol. 1 (\$2.50). The McGregor Co., Athens, Ga. 'Prison Life: A True Story of the Andersonville Prison,' by James Madison Page (a prisoner at Andersonville) and M. J. Haley; 'Henry Wirz: The True Story of the Andersonville Prison,' by Mildred Rutherford. (25 cents); 'The Southern Side of Andersonville,' by Dr. R. Randolph Stevenson; 'Prison Life of Jefferson Davis,' by Dr. John J. Craven; 'Prison Life at Baltimore and Johnson Island,' by Henry E. Shepherd.

"Perhaps all of these may be obtained from the Johnson Publishing Company, Richmond, Va."

R. R., Les Epilobes, Ch. de Fontenay, Lausanne, Switzerland, says that to a French reader some of Thornton Wilder's characters in "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" seem to come out of Merimée's ironic comedy, "Le Carrosse du St. Sacrement," but he wonders whether Wilder has read Merimée or whether both have the same source. Also, while he has no doubt of the human and the geographic truth of Willa Cather's "Death Comes for the Archbishop," he would like to know more about its historic background. Was there a Father Latour, a Father Joseph, a Padre Martinez?

AS to both these questions the authors have gone on record in print; at least Mr. Wilder said, in an interview in the *Daily Princetonian*, January 1928: "... the idea for it came to me while I was studying for an A.M. in French at the Princeton Graduate School. It was in a course conducted by that admirable man, Professor Louis Cons, that I received the suggestion for the first sketch in the book. The Marquesa de Montemayor is a fictionalization, if I may coin such a word, of Mme. de Sévigné, the famous French letter writer. Her personal characteristics have been altered, but the sentimental problem behind her life and letters—her unreciprocated love for her daughter—is the same."

Miss Cather was so often asked in how far "Death Comes for the Archbishop" was historical that she wrote a letter to *The Commonwealth* making all clear, a letter that her publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, afterward incorporated in a pamphlet that will be sent upon request. In this—a characteristic example of Miss Cather's lucid style—is set forth the connection between the incidents of the book and the recorded facts in the lives of Bishop Lamy and Bishop Machebeuf, the "originals" of the two friends in the novels. "In the main," she says, "I followed the life story of the two Bishops very much as it was, though I used many of my own experiences, and some of my father's. In actual fact, of course, Bishop Lamy died first of the two friends, and it was Bishop Machebeuf who went to his funeral. Often have I heard from the old people of how he broke down when he rose to speak and was unable to go on." But the letter is well worth reading throughout. It will make clear to many, by the way, why the title of the novel gives an elusive impression of familiarity. It was simply taken from Holbein's Dance of Death.

S. T. B. Ballard Vale, Mass., says that I might have mentioned, in the list of books on demonology, Nevius's "Demon Possession and Allied Themes" (Revell), as giving the foundation of actual observed fact from which any study of this subject ought to start. "Everything fanciful or fraudulent or speculative," he says, "about

demons, so far as it relates to demons that get inside a man, rests more or less on the foundation of such actual human experience as Nevius records. His second edition has an appendix of reviews of his first edition, in which such writers as Andrew Lang certify the typicalness of his material." I might also have added the information that one of the many calls upon the Reader's Guide that never reached print was to provide, some three years ago, a formula of exorcism that would be efficacious in ejecting a demon troubling a young woman in a small town in Eastern Pennsylvania. It was of course most irregular to call on me, but then this seemed to be an irregular sort of demon.

E. S. M., La Grange, Ill., sends these suggestions for inscriptions in the library:—

That place that doth contain  
My books, the best companions, is to me  
A glorious court, where hourly I converse  
With the old sages and philosophers;  
And sometimes, for variety, I confer  
With kings and emperors, and weigh their  
counsels.

—JOHN FLETCHER.

The true university of these days is a collection of books.

—THOMAS CARLYLE.

How poor remembrances are statues, tombs,  
And other monuments that men erect  
To princes, which remain in closed rooms  
Where but a few behold them, in respect  
Of books, that to the universal eye  
Show how they lived, the other where they  
lie.

—JOHN FLORIO.

Books are a part of man's prerogative,  
In formal ink they, thoughts and voices  
hold,

That we to them our solitude may give  
And make time present travel that of old.  
Our life, Fame pierceth at the end,  
And books it further backward do extend.

—SIR THOMAS OVERBURY.

I trust that these quotations are accurate, but I take no responsibility. For G. W. P., Los Angeles, writes: "There's something queer about the S. R. L.; it can never get its quotations from Milton quite straight. I've noticed that over and over again; and now comes The Reader's Guide (page 651, Feb. 2) to add its mite. What Milton really wrote was, 'A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit.' Doesn't that sound more like Milton than M. C.'s version?"

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### At the Sign of the Pegasus

"THE PEGASUS PRESS," to quote from a recent circular, "has a very definite aim—to combine the finest scholarship with beautiful production." Three series of volumes have been announced by the American representatives of the Press, Harcourt, Brace & Co., The Pantheon Series, definitive volumes on European painting, sculpture, and illumination; The Pegasus Press, volumes on printing and allied subjects; and The Bodoni Editions, hand-printed volumes from the Officina Bodoni. These series are entirely distinct as to form and contents.

Two of the volumes in the second series are at hand, both edited by Stanley Morison, who has written the first and contributed an introduction to the second: "Caractères de l'Ecriture dans la Typographie," issued in royal quarto in an edition of five hundred copies (with a further issue of twelve copies printed by hand), and "The Moyllus Alphabet," three hundred copies printed at the Officina Bodoni in Switzerland.

The "Caractères de l'Ecriture" is supplementary to the essay on non-roman forms of type contributed to the third volume of the *Fleurbaey*, by Johnson and Morison. The volume is well illustrated and annotated, and since the information on these types is only available in such scattered brochures, the book will be essential to the student of type faces. It is interesting to note how many books have been printed not only in italic, but in faces closely resembling what we know as script.

The mechanical rigidity of modern type faces is no new thing. If modern mechanical processes lend subtle encouragement to the designer and enable him to see his designs almost absolutely reproduced in type which is dead at its bringing forth, yet on paper at least the earlier designers sought to attain an equal mathematical accuracy, and to evolve a rigid system of drawing letters, especially roman capitals. No perfect system of design, built on squares and curves, has ever been devised; the most successful types are those which are full of irregularities and even absurdities. What is perhaps the earliest printed treatise on the geometrical plotting of such letters has been reprinted from the edition done at Parma about 1480 by Damianus Molyllus. There is a good introduction by Mr. Morison, a reproduction of the alphabet with description of the method, and a translation. The form is a small quarto of eighty-two pages.

The printers' work on these volumes seems to me good but not remarkable. Poliphilus type has been employed, and the presswork is of good quality. The very mild title-pages are a little weak in a place where they ought to be more vigorous, and the binding of the "Caractères" in particular, while quite charming, is too fragile. But that the two books were worth doing there can be no question. R.

### A Good Picture Book

"GARI MELCHERS, Painter" is the title of a monograph, largely in the form of plates, issued by William Edwin Rudge. It contains a short biographical foreword by Henriette Lewis-Hind. The illustrations are naturally the most dominant feature of the book, and are a good example of the off-set process at its best. If they lack the hardness and detail of half-tones, they more than compensate for their absence by their agreeable qualities. It seems to me a mistake to print the pictures on paper of so definite a surface pattern: the laid marks form a background which competes with that of the pictures; a smoother paper would have been better. Otherwise there is much to be said for the success with which they have been reproduced. There is one in color. Of the limited edition, with a signed etching by Melchers, fifty copies have been printed. R.

### At Sotheby's

THE *London Observer*, writing before the event of the auction held at Sotheby's on February 11 had this to say: "Prominent among the items offered for sale is an unpublished ballad opera by C. L. Dodgson ('Lewis Carroll'), intended for performance in his marionette theatre—which, incidentally, still exists, and was sold by the same auctioneers last November. This opera, which is written on thirteen quarto pages, is called 'La Guida di Bragia,' which is, in the vulgar tongue, 'Bradshaw's Guide.' The plot has, indeed, to do with railway travel, and tells of the adventures of various persons—among them a Malapropian lady who insists on having her 'life ensnared,' and the hero of the play, Orlando, one of whose songs opens thus, to the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne':

*Should all my luggage be forgot,  
And never come to hand,  
I'll never quit this fatal spot,  
But perish where I stand.*

It seems certain (in the light of recent experiences of what prices people will give for 'Lewis Carroll' manuscripts) that this little opera will fetch a big sum—though not, of course, anything like what was paid for the manuscript of 'Alice' last year.

"Other manuscripts which may be mentioned include that of Charles Dickens's last letter (as it is believed to be) written to a correspondent who had protested, on religious grounds, against Dickens's facetious use of the metaphor of 'the lamb led to the slaughter'; and that of Robert Burns's well-known and charming song beginning:—

*Thine am I, my faithful Fair,  
Thine, my lovely Nancy;  
Ev'ry pulse along my veins,  
Ev'ry roving fancy.*

"Many people, however, will be most strongly attracted by the remarkable array of letters—there are no fewer than sixteen of them—from Dr. Johnson. These include six to Mrs. Thrale (all of them published in Birkbeck Hill's edition) and eight to George and William Strahan (also printed by Hill). Best of them all, however, is one, apparently unpublished, addressed by Johnson to his wife. It is written on January 31, 1739-40, and refers to his alarm at hearing that she had hurt a tendon. He speaks, too, of his attempts to dispose of his tragedy of 'Irene.'

"The text of the letter is as follows:—

After hearing that you are in so much danger, as I apprehend, from a hurt on a tendon, I shall be very uneasy till I know you are recovered, and I beg that you will omit nothing that can contribute to it, nor deny yourself anything that may make confinement less melancholy. You have already suffered more than I can bear to reflect upon, and I hope more than either of us shall suffer again. One part at least I have often flattered myself we shall avoid for the future—our troubles will surely never separate us more . . . (MS defaced) . . . I shall promise myself many happy years from your kindness and affection, which I sometimes hope our millionaires have not yet deprived me . . .

Be assured, by dear Girl, that I have seen nobody in these rambles upon which I have been forced, that has not contributed to confirm my esteem & affection for thee, though that esteem & affection only contributed to increase my unhappiness when I reflected that the most amiable woman in the world was exposed by my means to miseries which I could not relieve.—I am, my charming love, yours.

SAM: JOHNSON.

This letter is peculiarly precious, because it is believed to be the only one surviving written by Johnson to his 'Tetty'—the middle-aged and odd-looking wife who inspired him with such noble and enduring love and devotion."

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