

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.

Biography

CONTEMPORARY IMMORTALS. By ARCHIBALD HENDERSON. Appleton. 1930. \$2.

From more serious labors Mr. Henderson has here turned to journalism. In what he calls "a humble mood of idealism" he presents his choice of contemporary immortals: Einstein, Gandhi, Edison, Mussolini, Shaw, Marconi, Jane Addams, Orville Wright, Paderewski, Curie, Ford, and Kipling. Each figure receives an essay, or rather a warm appreciation, of about fifteen pages. The author is in general well informed, his biographical data is interestingly presented, and he is able to offer personal reminiscences of several of his heroes, notably Shaw and Einstein. But the general effect is of elementary and superficial appraisal. As a mathematician Mr. Henderson can write of Einstein with some authority, and as an indefatigable biographer of Shaw his observations on that playwright have an expert quality. But it is obvious that he knows little more than the ordinary observer of the political and economic forces behind Mussolini and Gandhi, and that he has no expert qualifications for treating Orville Wright and Mme. Curie. He is also fulsome in eulogy. The volume would have been better if his idealism had not been quite so "humble" in quality. If he had called to his aid a little more critical edge we might have been spared the assertion that "Ford is a deep thinker," and that "Ford irresistibly reminds us of . . . Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln"; the assertion that "the strongest power ranged against democracy in the world today is a single man of destiny—*Il Duce*"; and the assertion that "in Kipling is incarnated, by general acknowledgment, an innate, mystic consciousness of the lofty destiny of English-speaking peoples." This volume will have its value for high school seniors, college freshmen, and others on their mental level, but more cannot be said for it.

THAT MAN DAWES. By PAUL R. LEACH. Reilly. 1930. \$4.

Written in "campaign biography" style, this account of a man who rose from a humble law office in Lincoln, Nebraska, to be Comptroller of the Currency, organizer and head of one of Chicago's leading banks, general purchasing agent for the American army in France, author of the German reparation plan known by his name, Vice-President, and Ambassador to Great Britain, gives a lively and on the whole accurate story of the career of Charles G. Dawes and the events with which it is connected. The episode which made Dawes a political figure was his success in winning Illinois for McKinley in the nomination campaign of 1896 in the face of Cullom's "favorite son" candidacy. But when he resigned as Comptroller of the Currency to try for the Senate, he was defeated and not until the World War, fifteen years later, did he again become a national personage. In fact, his name did not become familiar to the mass of his countrymen until he was nominated for Vice-President in 1924. His inaugural address, a sensational attack on the Senate rules for imposing practically no limit on debate, was the opening gun in a picturesque but unsuccessful fight.

This book presents him as the country knows him—dynamic, resourceful, impatient of stupidity, inefficiency, or pettiness. Its author, political writer on the *Chicago Daily News*, ought to be more careful than to say that Presidents have "often graduated to their high office from the Senate"; very few of them have done so.

Fiction

AFTER WAR. Translated from the German of LUDWIG RENN. Dodd, Mead. 1931. \$2.50.

This book, by the German author of "War," would appear to be a literal account of the author's experiences with various groups in the drifting and more or less bewildering period immediately following the breakdown of the German imperial army. The return of the German soldiers to the interior, the Kapp Putsch, and other episodes of those disturbed days are seen, not in perspective, but from the inside, and the limited outlook of a soldier, uprooted and hopeless, who finally drifted into Communism.

There is little or no characterization, description, or supporting atmosphere—simply an individual's record, largely in dialogue, of his little ups and downs, from day to day. For Germans who lived through the same period and themselves supply the back-

ground, Renn's narrative may well have historical value and story interest. The average American reader gets as little notion from Renn's record of what actually was going on as the average German reader would get of contemporary corruption in New York, from, let us say, some Manhattan patrolman's literal and unelaborated record of orders received and conversations held during the past two or three years.

STRANGE COMBAT. By SARAH SALT. Brewer, Warren & Putnam. 1931. \$2.50.

This book, which is about people horribly weak, horrifyingly futile, leaves an impression of clear, hard strength. From the first page, with its etched picture of an ordinary boy out of an ordinary job, to the last with its fierce, blind tragedy, there is no faltering in the swift pace Miss Salt sets for herself.

It is almost annoying to find one's self so intense over people like these. Why should one sympathize with Jane? She is a fool, a failure, a weakling. And then there's Andrew . . . of all the deadly bores! He is a perfect case of arrested development. They can be met, Jane and Andrew and their half-baked, besotted friends, at almost any speakeasy or Greenwich Village apartment, and we for one avoid them like the plague. But the book refuses to be put down; it demands a reading to the finish—that finale which is so mad, and so fitting, in its frenzied uselessness.

What is there to say about such a book? It is breathless, oppressive, tender, brutal. Miss Salt has the genius of sympathy for these worthless creations of hers. The scene at the prize fight is a little masterpiece of contradictory terms. Smells, blood, the child with lousy hair, shining sweat, the howling crowd out for its money's worth of carnage . . . and what does one get out of that unexpurgated description? Why, only heartrending pity for Andrew, who is beaten to a pulp, and for Jane, who is watching. It is not a description of a prize fight (though it is, and a good one), but merely a background against which the figures of Jane and Andrew stand out in full relief—as the most exciting scene becomes only a background to all of us during an intense emotional experience.

Not only is Miss Salt able to describe prize fights and drunken quarrels, but she is able to make children "talk true," an even rarer accomplishment. Jane's small niece and nephews are given the privilege of being normally human.

"Strange Combat" is a far from pleasant book, but it is a more complete experience than that speakeasy or that Greenwich Village studio.

LISA. By EDITH YOUNG. Morrow. 1931. \$2.

Mrs. Young's first novel is a desperately serious chronicle of life in Bohemia, of the sort more common just after the war. It recalls some of the less successful pages of Mr. Floyd Dell's early efforts, or the novels of Mrs. Evelyn Scott. Its principal recommendation is its utterly sincere tone. In spite of a good many obvious hesitations and awkwardnesses in the telling, the book is plainly speaking the author's mind, giving us the deeply felt product of her thought, founded on a real desire to understand and illuminate a definite problem—that of two men in love with the same woman. For this straightforward avoidance of formulas and pleasing tricks Mrs. Young's work must be received with respect, though as a book it leaves much to be desired.

The author has chosen to tell most of the story in the first person, but instead of speaking as the woman in the case, handicaps herself greatly by attempting a narrative from the standpoint of one of the men. There is a disconcerting touch of the feminine in some of the supposedly male narrator's phrases and reactions, and the confusion is increased by the inclusion of some fragments from the girl's diary at the end of the book, after she is dead and the climax of the story is past. As a creator of character Mrs. Young succeeds best with her heroine, Lisa, who has at least taken on to the full a maddening air of mystery before we are through with her. Neither of the lovers, nor any of the supporting cast, all of whom seem a rather quibbling lot living for the analysis of their not very genuine emotions, ever become quite real. An intolerable air of intellectual pretension mars the earlier parts of the book; certainly no human beings talk or act as the guests at Mrs. Lessing's party do. The end is better, and the best writing of all is in the diary, (Continued on page 718)

BOOKS THAT ARE TALKED ABOUT



by
**YOUNGHILL
KANG**

from Seoul to Tokyo and Siberia."—JOHN CARTER in the *New York Times*. \$3.00

The Grass Roof

Light-Horse Harry Lee

by Thomas Boyd

author of "Mad Anthony Wayne," etc.

A stirring biography of the gallant cavalry leader of the American Revolution, friend of Washington, legislator, father of Robert E. Lee, and creature of a strange destiny that clouded his later years. Mr. Boyd has done a striking picture of the man and a vivid re-creation of the early years of the republic. Illustrated. \$3.50

Puritan's Progress

"Arthur Train has given the Puritans a 'break.' It is because of this rather than his shrewd assembling of obscure and amusing facts that his book is notable. . . . He has dived under our debunkers and scored a touchdown against them. He is amusing and stimulating, refreshing and a joy to one jaded by the constant stream of thundering contempt for our forebears issuing from the presses."

—GEORGE CURRIE in the *Brooklyn Eagle*.

\$3.50

Atlantic Circle

Around the Ocean with the Winds and Tides

by Leonard Outhwaite

The eventful yarn of the 14,000-mile cruise of a small schooner, through fair weather and foul, on broad seas and dangerous coasts: a tale that touches four continents, with delightful and frequently thrilling excursions into unfamiliar ports and places. Moreover, an invaluable book for the small-boat navigator.

Profusely illustrated from photographs. \$3.50



by
**DAVID
BURNHAM**

This Our Exile

"There is nothing but excitement in the reading of 'This Our Exile.' . . . One of those inspiring books that simply demand being talked about."

—FANNY BUTCHER in the *Chicago Tribune*.

"Brilliant in conception, rich in flavor, and deep in insight. . . . Deserves as many superlatives as one can find for it."—*St. Paul News*.

Second big printing. \$2.50

at your bookstore

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, NEW YORK

The jungle calls and men heed
its call...whether it be the pathetic
schoolmaster, or the great adven-
turers in search of El Dorado who
should have warned him.

THE FOREST SHIP

by ARNOLD HOLLRIEGEL

"A wonderful book told in the manner of Conrad's Marlow," says *The London Morning Post* of this novel—a tale of the Amazon both today and in the days when Pizarro and Orellana, the first white men to sail the river, went in search of the city of gold. Romance and reality, travel and mystery are blended in this bewitching story, which carries the nostalgia of far places and the pulsing life of the jungle.

Translated by Ethel Colburn Mayne. \$2.50

18 East 48 St. **VIKING PRESS** New York

Points of View

The Other Side of the Shield

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

I have just been reading "Jeremiah Tries Reading." I live in a little house on a side road in the country. To the west and south and east the view is unobstructed for miles as we live on a high place, sort of a hill. I read that article, and then I looked out across the hills—toward Chicago, where the crime of the age is supposed to be centered. Between here and there are—how many folks? I have no idea. But—plenty. Most of them troubled by the depression, but—all right folks.

I have looked out toward the neighboring farms and wondered what the people living upon them would say about that rather amazing first paragraph of your article. The crime and muck of the age isn't half as well known as it imagines it is! If you were to ask me the most important news item of the day right now—and I answered what was uppermost in my mind—I would reply, "The Stewarts lost a sow last night." The fact that four new little pigs are without a mother today is far more important than that there's a political mess in Washington or that some well insured bank was robbed last night. And that is humanity. Everything you say in that first paragraph is true. But—there is never a picture with but one side.

The chief reason no writer has tried to write sanely is that the curse of syndicated newspapers is upon us and there is no humanity, no sense of honor, no personality at all in that sort of thing. It's just a huge, vicious monster with a fiendish lust for dividends. Any organization without personality, without individuals personally responsible to the people of their community or audience, is going to be a menace. It can't be otherwise. Nothing matters but dividends. All right—more papers sell with lurid, exciting stories than with sane news. It's nobody's fault. It's a condition of national mind. And writers must cater to that mind if they expect publicity and sales. Now, we are beginning to realize the damaging effects, and we suddenly sit up and look

about and take notice of the wrong phases of the movies, the radio, the papers, and magazines. If we could stop syndicated news, we would see and hear a very different world. If we had a newspaper in our town which printed news of our town, we would have murder stories so seldom we would remember them for years. As it is, we have no local paper. Our newspaper is a Scripps affair, and we get a few local items if they happen to feel in the mood to print them. Every small city is the same now. All crime is advertised like a *Graf Zeppelin*. Well—if we would all stop reading it, talking it, or listening to it—there is nothing so sure to kill as silence, the ignoring of a subject.

It's been a terrible year. We are one of the less than average families caught in the whirl and left stranded, and there isn't any open way out, so far. We have no salary checks and no money, but an alarmingly increasing stack of debts. If we were to tune in on those speakers on the radio who tell us just how tragic the conditions are we might feel so sorry for ourselves that we would take poison, or try to hold up oil stations or join some "red" group so we might yell about it all. But we happen to be interested in flowers and gardens and baby chicks and getting some wren houses up, and the airedale got hurt in a fight, and there are woods to watch for the appearance of some *Erginina bulbosa*, and a neighbor who can use some help cutting wood.

No, we don't need to make more laws, nor reform anything seriously. We need to laugh at ourselves, and make a garden. Have you any idea how many folks are going to make gardens this spring for the first time, at least in years? When the cities were booming, the farms were deserted. Now, everybody who had a bit of land has gone back to it, and those who didn't, have bought or rented some. Potato bugs and tomato worms are marvellous competition to interest in lesser criminals. If some of the leading writers of pessimism would only join some good horticultural society it would just about save the country! As that is one of my own pet hobbies, I happen to

know more of that than of any other phases, and I know so many interesting things, fascinating things, of far more importance than worrying over a deplorable phase which will pass soon. No one phase ever lasted forever yet! It's so big a world we can still find whatever we look for, I think. It would be nice and quite a glorious thing if someone would write beautifully about all the lovely things which are true about us Americans, but no book is read by everybody, so ever so many folks would never know it had been written. Life is a heap like the radio, isn't it? We tune in, or out, according to our individual tastes. I tune in on talks by a fine old gardener, by tree and flower experts, also the music of symphonies and certain folk singers. Often there are voices telling me it isn't safe to be alive or that the country has been sold out by somebody for some reason. Well, if I listen to or read that sort of thing a while I always have to take the dog and go for a walk back over the hills and smell the trees and feel the good, solid earth and remind myself that, regardless of the static, the great god Pan is piping on the river's brim just as truly now as a million years ago or hence.

We are travellers; why should we take our vehicle, named Earth, so very solemnly? We will have finished the journey before the worst happens anyhow! We have taken ourselves too seriously. I wonder if we have been a bit too sure of our own importance? We make such wise-sounding statements about the universe and human nature and religion and all the rest of it, when, if we would just go to some gypsy camp and follow their pattern for a season we would learn that after all there isn't any problem but of our own making. Let us go to a hilltop with Walt Whitman, on his birthday this spring maybe, and realize that so long as there are Leaves of Grass—God's in the same old heaven, and behaviorism is expressing human conceits today, and always. But presently there will be tulips. And new radishes and lettuce, and the earth will produce food and foliage and flowers. Politics and crime may go on, but regardless of anything, the important fact in creation is that Spring is sure, and almost here.

I seem to have written half a book. I didn't mean to do that. But it is a gray day, and time means little out here on the hilltops.

I wish magazines wouldn't run unsigned articles. Now I have to write some sort of inane sounding request for some clerk to figure out because I do not know who I want my letter given to! Please tell somebody who may know how to make the wheels go 'round that I want to vote—emphatically—for signatures!

ETHELYN RINN.

Kalamazoo, Mich.

P. S. Maybe I'd better not start asking for votes. I haven't paid for my paper and so can't be a "member in good standing." When I was a child, people took eggs or potatoes to the editor. I wonder if I couldn't send the editor a hen or maybe some nice, green onions. I have never seen the home of a New York editor—not a really editor—but as I have seen everything else in the world on fire escapes there, I would think a perfectly good editor would be able to keep a few hens on the fire escape!

Verbum Sap

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

Won't you please pass along to the person who has been writing the mournful editorials about the bitter seasoning of hate in modern American fiction, the following story from our collection of family anecdotes? Ask him to remember not only the well-known axiom that hate is much more pungent literary flavoring than good-will, but this little tale of international cookery when next he speaks about the dull pens and pallid diluted talents of those few writers who still, once in a while, feel that they can bear up and enjoy their meals even though living in the U. S. A. and belonging to the human race.

A cousin of my father's, a great favorite with that generation of our family, went to Mexico years ago as a mining engineer. He was in charge of an important undertaking, which kept him far in the back regions of the country. Adaptable, energetic, interested in his work, proud of his success in it, he rather enjoyed those Mexican years—all but the cooking. Every letter that came back was full of laments over the amount of red pepper and other fiery condiments with which Mexican cooks spoiled (for him) the excellent raw materials they used. Racial habits are hard to change, cooking habits are impossible to change. He tried rewards, he tried dire threats, but of course as everybody of experience would have known to

begin with, his food continued to taste, as he used to say in his wistful letters home, as though it were Vesuvius and Mt. Aetna in full eruption. "Take chicken!" he would write in those homesick letters. "When I see the cook plucking a chicken, I can just taste one of Aunt Martha's fricassees—that gravy made with cream, poured over her biscuits! The tears fairly come to my eyes when, at dinner-time I get—what I always get at dinner-time: the same old mouthful of red-hot hell."

Or soup. "If I can just live," ran his nostalgic refrain, "till I have had a plateful of tomato-bisque soup, full of the real savory flavor of ripe tomatoes, instead of this one everlasting Mexican flavor of red pepper!"

Well, after so long a time, he came home. I well remember the dinner which was prepared for him by his devoted family, one of the banner dinners of my childhood. It was late August, happily, just the season for the best broilers. And tomatoes hung red-ripe on all the vines. What a pleasure it was to everyone to prepare a perfect home dinner, just the kind that Cousin George loved, just the dishes he had so often written about from his tropical exile! Such golden-brown, white-fleshed chicken. Such rich full-flavored gravy. And such a tomato soup! Made out of ripe tomatoes and summer cream. Suave, smooth, spicy.

Cousin George's eye lighted up when he saw it. "Ah, this is getting back to God's country!" said he, dipping his spoon in.

I don't need to tell you what he said. You foresaw it accurately from the first of this story. So I won't tell you, except that it rapidly ran the gamut from "Seems as though this soup was a little flat, isn't it? Pass me the salt, will you," to a "Great Scott, what's the matter with this chicken! No taste to it!" And ended with—of course, what did you expect?—"Why, everything on this table tastes like so much bread-dough! For Heaven's sake, somebody give me some red pepper!"

MARTHA HULME.

"Pompilia and Her Poet"

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

My "Pompilia and Her Poet," reviewed in your issue of March 21st, should have been ascribed to Brentano's. I wrote you that the change was made one month after the book appeared but evidently word did not reach your reviewer. I enjoyed his summary tremendously. After an unbroken chorus of praise in letters and reviews, I had begun to fear something was wrong with a book that could not arouse antagonism anywhere. I am reassured by his wiping it off the map in that delightful last sentence: "It is only just to add that a book which under no circumstances could have possessed real value has profited rather than lost by its allocation to Miss Gaylord."

There are a lot of circumstances in life remote from an esoteric scholar, but I value sturdy denunciation as a tribute. However as Brentano's can't sell Miss Gaylord and want to sell the book, do let me say that I made it most emphatic in the preface and on the jacket that I wrote "Pompilia and Her Poet" unpretentiously in the hope of making the Brownings enjoyable to the myriads who, in 1931, either do not know them or who have the mistaken impression that they are intellectual giants to be shunned. I have been surprised and delighted to have Browning scholars like William Lyon Phelps, Richard Burton, John Hall Wheelock, Dr. Armstrong of Baylor, Dr. Russell of Stanford, Dr. Fairchild of the University of Missouri, and many others appreciate my intent and acclaim my book in lectures, comments, and reviews. "De Gustibus—!"

HARRIET GAYLORD.

Yonkers, New York.

"Lo Cunto de li Cunti"

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

At the suggestion of the Librarian of Congress I am venturing to ask your help in tracing copies of any editions of the following work in any libraries in America, not mentioned in the Union catalogue of the Library of Congress. The work in question is: Giovan Battista Basile [Gian Alesio Abbattutis] "Lo Cunto de li Cunti" (or) "Il Pentamerone." The first edition appeared in Naples in 5 parts (1634-1636) while the most recent reprint was that issued in 1927 in New York (Burton's English translation).

Cav. Benedetto Croce and myself are preparing a new edition with full bibliographical details. It is for these latter that I am writing to you for information.

N. M. PENZER.

12 Clifton Hill,
St. John's Wood, N.W. 8, London, Eng.

the GOOD EARTH

the novel by
PEARL S. BUCK

A best - seller
everywhere
A Book-of-the-Month
Club choice

A "highly exciting story"¹

A "perfect work of art"²

A "beautiful, beautiful book"³

¹ N.Y. EVENING POST

² N.Y. TIMES

³ SAT. REV. OF LITERATURE

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