

Round about Parnassus

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THERE are not very many younger Western poets today who remain in the west and also build up a growing reputation for themselves. But there is at least one, and he is Howard McKinley Corning who hails from Oregon. Four years ago Harold Vinal published Corning's first book, "These People," and we commented upon it then. Now his second book, "The Mountain in the Sky," is brought out by the Metropolitan Press of Portland, Oregon. There were good character studies and there was good description in the first book. It was forthright and sincere work. But in this second volume we suddenly come upon such an arresting and original poem as "A Drift of Oregon Bluejays," and say excellent.

Undoubtedly Mr. Corning has learned from the work of Robert Frost; but there is no modern American poet who has taught more younger men than Frost, we do not mean directly, but through their perusal of his work. But the influence is not obtrusive. And when Mr. Corning gets to his historical documents he has characteristically Western things to tell us, such as:

... McKenzie Pass, as the day blew out
In a gulf of wind on a wash of blue,
Opened to let the desert shout
And a ghostly caravan go through. . . .
Cattle with horns of sunset gold,
With flanks of bronze and hooves a-plod,
Pushed noses eastward into the cold,
Labored along by the urging prod
Of a weary herdsman. "Hi! Hi! Hi!"
Joaquin Miller comes out of the sky!

One doesn't have to be an Oregonian, one merely has to be an American to get sort of homesick at that, for what has New York, really, to do with America?

And the pack-rats in the old house that acted like squirrels or ghosts. Here, of course, is the type of episode Frost likes to make use of, but it is obviously description of actual experience. "White Burial," to be sure, is entirely too near a certain definite one of Frost's lyrics. Mr. Corning's memory has betrayed him. But the atmosphere and scenery of most of the poems is entirely of Mr. Corning's own country, the episodes recounted things that actually happened to him, the impressions put down, just what was seen and heard. The following may serve as example of this:

Talk, talk frogs!
Beat with your metal hammers.
Soon the night mother comes hushing your
choral rune,
While the pheasant and the grouse
Lie nestled with the brookmints and the
bracken;
And the dogs of the starry hunter
Measure their misty trail to the salt foam
of the sea.

There is more than a hint of Edwin Arlington Robinson in the title of "Candary's Door," and "The Dark Friends" remind us of that poet. On the other hand "Deacon's Dobbin and His Two Paradises" is about as original a little poem as one could find, successfully fantastic. Mr. Corning has certainly not yet put forth his full strength, and he will shake off entirely his two influences, but already he has been able to get the characteristics of his own part of the country on paper, and that is a good deal. He makes us feel Oregon.

"The Collected Poems of Wilfrid Wilson Gibson" appeared from Macmillan in 1929, and now a new book of poems, "Hazards," from the same prolific English poet, dedicated to Robert and Elinor Frost, also comes before us. Gibson has written a great deal and on the whole very well. What it is he lacks that fails to put him as a poet on a par with Masfield it would be difficult to say, just as there is a quality in the work of the late Edward Thomas that makes him actually a better poet than either. There is something about Gibson's work that is too intentional. We look at the portrait prefixed to the Collected Poems and it illustrates what we mean. It seems too intentional also. It is the face of a poet, and yet Sherrill Schell has so arranged the head against the sky as to give it a theatrical quality. Gibson's poems have not often a theatrical quality, but they often give the impression that he has said, "Go to, I will represent the sociological spirit of my time," which he began by saying before the Great War blasted us out of many ideas and killed his friend, the poet, Rupert Brooke. We do not mean that Mr. Gibson is insincere or that his pictures of

people are not often true pictures and deeply felt. It is simply that the search for material seems sometimes too evident. Yet in twenty years Gibson has accomplished a solid body of work that directly expresses all that he has found in life and he has found a great deal. What he writes of an unnamed poet is true of him:

So much he had to say,
Such crowded news he gathered by the way,
That his tongue stammered, struggling with
a sense
Of the unutterable opulence
And unimaginable magnificence
Of every day.

He has sympathized with the common people and written of them in a way that sometimes suggests the prosiness of George Crabbe and sometimes Crabbe's unquenchable interest in common life. But that is by no means all of Gibson. "Beware the pedestal," he says to poets, "and keep your feet Familiar with the common earth—"

Veil not your soul in vague and baffling
verse:
Obscurity is not profundity:
Rather, O poet, let each poem be
A crystal through which all may see
Your soul's integrity.

He has tried to observe that rule, and at the same time he has seen life in various color and in many-sided drama. His versification is able, though he almost utterly lacks magic. He gives us significant vignettes of people and full length portraits of people with the sure touch of an accomplished short story writer. We read him chiefly for his stories, though they have none of the deep, ironic bite of Hardy's stories in verse. They are sometimes made too explicit. When he speaks of himself or his own he voices right attitudes and convincing emotions that we do not remember in particular words. There is something a great poet does with language that Gibson never does. The phrase does not leap out at one. The manner of expression is workmanlike, the work was worth doing, the idea we get of the man behind the work is most likable. But we are never swept off our feet. Perhaps because Gibson's own feet are all too solidly upon the ground. He is the last, practically, of the brilliant Georgian group so disrupted by the Great War. He is to be admired. But we cannot put him among the best of that group even though he writes dextrously.

Richard R. Smith has imported two open-air books of poems from England, the first being Will H. Ogilvie's "A Clean Wind Blowing," with illustrations by J. Morton Sale, the second Captain Edric G. Roberts's "Hunters' Moon," with eight colored pictures by Gilbert Holliday. Both poets have written of the hunting-field. But this present book of Ogilvie's does not so specialize. He sings simple songs of the Border countryside. It is all rather pleasant journalism. It bears little relation to poetry, much to the magazine verse of some twenty years ago. Captain Roberts interests slightly more because he makes use of the episodes of the hunting-field and conveys some idea of the fun of riding to hounds. His book is an excellent book to put on a hunt club table. He is not so good as Whyte Melville but bears his won credentials as bard of the meet.

Another book of poems from Richard R. Smith is "Pass, Stranger," by Mrs. Peyton Mackeson, full of a great deal of stereotype. It is like a thousand other fairly well written books of poems with nothing really to distinguish it. This is a fair example of the sort of thing:

NOCTURNE

Like silver bees
The stars swarm in transparent space,
The myriad stars of Him whose face
Shines like a sun above dark trees.
Night moving like a wheel of gold,
Moon shadows flowing on the void,
And the deep offertory of seas.

That is really pretty bad, we regret to say!

The Ibero-American Student Federation was organized by the First Ibero-American Student Congress that has just adjourned in Mexico City following a two week session. The congress was attended by delegates from virtually every Latin-American republic and from Spain.

A Letter from Canada

By WILLIAM ARTHUR DEACON

THE current season, which is a fruitful one, has produced no outstanding volume of poetry, but two first rate novels have emerged from the drove of lesser fictions. The increasing national consciousness in letters is stimulated by Professor V. B. Rhodenizer's "A Handbook on Canadian Literature" (Graphic), the first treatise on the subject to be at once comprehensive, readable, brief, and judicious. He has had the unacademic courage to deal emphatically with contemporary work, claiming supremacy in the novel for the sombre but by no means silent Swede, Frederick Philip Grove, and berating Mazo de la Roche for her levity and lack of "realism." That restriction of critical sympathy, which drives him to this choice between the tragic and the comic genius, is the only flaw in a valuable book.

Miss de la Roche's contribution, "The Portrait of a Dog" (Macmillan), is an engaging biography of her favorite pet, Bunty, now dwelling in the happy hereafter that awaits good little dogs. Some regret is expressed that even so charming a document should be allowed to break the "Jalna" series of which the third volume is finished, and will appear next fall. This complaint comes almost wholly from those who have not yet seen the book. All who have read it, like it. It is beautifully done; and differs from most animal stories in being tenderly reminiscent without pretense on the author's part to anything like full understanding of canine psychology. This objective treatment is good. That the whole reverie is addressed to the dog itself, through the recurring "you," while pleasantly original in the opening pages, loses novelty and effectiveness with each repetition.

Frederick Philip Grove's "The Yoke of Life" (Macmillan), by contrast, is the weightiest and finest of his books, being a novel of power and, in short, his masterpiece. Architecturally, it is far ahead of his autobiographical "A Search for America"; while in breadth, depth, subtlety of perception, and literary finish, it surpasses his "Settlers of the Marsh." Since the themes are identical, the only logical comparison for "The Yoke of Life" is Hardy's "Jude the Obscure." The Canadian parallel, however, is not an imitation, since Grove, when he wrote it, had never read a line of Thomas Hardy.

A peculiar figure has barged over the sidelines into the center of the Canadian game. Maurice Constantin-Weyer was for twelve years a farmer in Manitoba. He dropped everything in 1914 to rush to his native France to enlist. After the war he returned, viewed the sad remains of his farm, and hurried back to Paris to turn author. His literary career began with his capture of the Goncourt Prize last year for his first novel, "A Man Sees His Past." It was in the Goncourt tradition, with everything eliminated except a bare plot-outline and a stark, semi-featureless landscape for background. The setting was Canada, but only as Canada might be seen through French eyes, and strained through a French passion for abstraction.

This amazing man has this year, in "A Martyr's Folly" (Macmillan), written a novel which is as thoroughly native as his former story was alien. It is a novelized biography of Louis Riel, the chief "rebel" of the Canadian Northwest Rebellions of 1773 and 1885, whom all good Orangemen are taught to hate and despise. Mr. Constantin-Weyer's lively narrative does belated justice to the leader, whom the half-breeds of the Red River Valley worship as a patriot. With compelling simplicity, the author portrays the public-spirited and bewildered youth, who was only fitted for command by reason of the hopeless incompetence of his kinsmen. The dispute was over ignoring the squatters when the Hudson's Bay Company was selling what is now Western Canada to the Dominion Government. Riel, though ill equipped to bargain against a man as able as Strathcona, won some consideration for his people and full rights for the Roman Catholic Church; but when the English Protestants of Ontario demanded a victim, Riel was deserted by his friends, and hanged as the result of a political-judicial-religious murder conspiracy.

Among several first rate war books, George A. Drew's "Canada's Fighting Airmen" (Maclean) is the most spectacular; yet I hesitate to include it as the record is so nationally flattering. It takes the form of sketches of the careers of our ten leading aces. In August, 1914, less than one hundred British planes were fit for service.

At the armistice, 22,171 were in commission, engaging 30,000 men, of whom one-third were Canadians. The official score for enemy planes destroyed shows Bishop and Gollishaw ahead of all other British pilots; and with Barker and MacLaren, these four Canadians rate among the ten best fighters of all nations.

Public questions have drawn the attention of Canadian authors as never before. The problem of where to bestow her foreign trade is uppermost at the moment. Stephen Leacock deserves a decoration for bravery in connection with his "Economic Prosperity in the British Empire" (Macmillan). No Canadian government could last a week if it acted on his suggestions, turned autonomous Canada back into a crown colony, run from London, for the benefit of the English manufacturer. Besides little things like guaranteeing the British national debt, Professor Leacock would have Canada absorb England's surplus population at the rate of two million head a year. Intended seriously, the book cannot be taken so, but belongs with the "Nonsense Novels."

Those fragments of speeches, however, which constitute Lord Beaverbrook's "My Case for Empire Trade" (Macmillan) are not to be laughed off. The newspaper baron of Canadian birth begins his program for increased inter-Empire trade by showing that it is Britain's move first, and proving that she will best benefit her home industries by taxing foreign food imports, with the object of giving preference in the Liverpool market to Dominion wheat and cattle, in exchange for the coal and steel trade of Canada. This is virtually what the Canadian and Australian premiers have just offered the British government, whose acceptance would mean a tremendous shift of dominion purchasing-power away from the United States.

Master Jourdain

UN ANIMATEUR DE LA JEUNESSE
AU XIIIÈME SIÈCLE. Par MARGUERITE
ARON. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer. 1930.

Reviewed by ALICE MAMMELSDORF

THIS book is the first volume of the collection "Temps et Visages" (Periods and Personalities) which is being brought out by the publishing house of Desclée de Brouwer. It is extraordinarily successful in recreating a whole period, and what a period it was. Here we have the thirteenth century of the universities, aflame with scientific and philosophic curiosity, waging eager warfare against every form of heresy and ignorance. Renaissance before the Renaissance! A Christian Renaissance which moulds the theologians and renews faith and thought in the youth of the schools through the teaching of the mendicant orders. Here we have the Paris of Philip Augustus and of St. Louis, with its theological Studium, its turbulent universities; here is Bologna teacher of jurists; Oxford with its students of every nationality. Against this background stands out the powerful, gentle, and yet enigmatic face of the Blessed Jourdain of Saxony, *maitre es arts*, of Paris, later preaching brother, and General of the Preachers after St. Dominic from 1222 to 1237.

Is he to be identified with the other Jourdain-Jordanus Nemorarius—the greatest mathematician of his times, who anticipated modern geometry and statics? Probably the two personalities are in reality but one.

Master Jourdain is also an indefatigable traveller. His journeys from Paris to Bologna, from Rome to Oxford, from Naples to the Holy Land form one of the chief attractions of this book, substantial and yet full of variety, which in the last chapters depicts the true nature of this great teacher as that of a saint and mystic.

This work is an account, written with the layman in view, yet sufficiently learned to satisfy scholars, of the university and religious life of the Middle Ages.

According to a despatch to the New York Times, under a compulsory State insurance law for journalists which was enacted on Jan. 1, 752 newspaper men already have reported to the Czechoslovak authorities that they are entitled to social insurance payments. In the event of disability journalists may draw a minimum annual allowance of 1,200 crowns, an amount corresponding roughly in American coinage to \$36. Widows of newspaper men receive minimum payments of 6,000 crowns and orphans 3,000 crowns.

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.

Art

THE OUTLINE OF ART. Edited by SIR WILLIAM ORPEN. Putnam, 1930. \$4.50.

The judgment implied in any encyclopedic work is most clearly expressed in distribution of space. Here the present work, which we now have compressed into a single clumsy volume, makes no favorable impression. Premising that the survey is chiefly confined to painting, art from Cimabue to the end of the seventeenth century claims a little more than a third of the total space. Of the remaining two-thirds nearly a half is devoted to British painting. This misconception of the scale means that the brief treatment accorded to the renaissance and the baroque is thin and often perfunctory, while frequently inexact. To write a history of art without so much as mentioning Masaccio is in its way a triumph of elimination. The pages devoted to the art of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the latter portions contributed by Mr. Frank Ruther, are, while offering little that is distinguished as criticism, written from first-hand experience and agreeably. For the student who is not primarily interested in British art, the book is chiefly a too bulky picture gallery.

A MINIATURE HISTORY OF ART. By R. H. WILENSKI. With a Chapter on American Art by EDWARD ALDEN JEWELL. Oxford University Press, 1930.

Mr. Wilenski, already favorably known for a book on modern painting, has achieved the miracle of compressing a general history of art into some eighty small pages. This has been possible, as he admits in a preface, only by treating the form of the work of art as determined by circumstances. These circumstances he endeavors to epitomize, in the main leaving out the artist and the work of art. Of course, this results in a rather bare oversimplification. The history is of the spirit of the various ages. The degree of determinism implied is shown in Mr. Wilenski's treatment of Modernistic Art. Expressionism is the last wiggle of a dying Romanticism. Constructionism is demanded by a mechanized civilization and is the only valid and modern art now possible.

In the remoter centuries one may carry off such *dicta* unchallenged. But, in the here and now, have the skyscraper and the tractor become a central and engrossing interest, have these inventions radically changed human nature? With characteristic good sense Mr. John Sloan has recently denied that we are "living in a machine age." The issue is at least open. It is perhaps the defect of Mr. Wilenski's attitude that no issues are open at any time. It is hard to see who will profit by an analysis which gives equal certitude to the painfully obvious and to the entirely problematical. However, the student will find his account in the Appendix, which contributes a select list of objects in American Museums, illustrating quite broadly the history of Art.

Fiction

MITSOU. By COLETTE. Albert & Charles Boni, 1930. \$2.

The success of "Chéri" seems to have led a number of people, including her publishers, into searching for something else of hers capable of withstanding the rigors of translation. The search has not been too easy, what with the censorship here, the extreme fragility of Colette's prose, and the rapidly changing fashions which have made some of her books seem quaintly outmoded. The first fruits of this search are presented to us in this translation of "Mitsou," which is not half the book that "Chéri" was, but is still worth having for itself.

"Mitsou" is, in fact, Colette's war book, though one might never think so from the title, suggestive of perfume and Japanese variety performers. It is the very sketchy history of how a French music hall star called Mitsou (how she got her name is one of the best things in the book) falls in love with a lieutenant home on leave, thereby disturbing the well-ordered routine of her life completely. As pathetic in its way as any of the grander epics of the war, it demonstrates how completely helpless the human being faced with such weighty words as Love and War can be, even though he may be ignorant of the one, and deliberately refuse to pay attention to the other. As might be expected, Colette has done the thing in just the right way, without underlining the decidedly Gallic climax of the affair too strongly, without sentiment, and especially without once trying to be pro-

found about it. The letters written by Mitsou to her lieutenant are alone worth the price of the book, though they were quite obviously written not by the character but by Colette herself in an inspired moment, to show the superior craft and strength of purpose which any woman can display in a duel of wits with a man. Jane Terry has done the difficult job of translating Colette's inevitably right French into at least readable English.

GREAT OAKS. By BEN AMES WILLIAMS. Dutton, 1930. \$2.50.

Trees with wide-spreading branches and moss swinging long and mysterious; a shelving beach where the sea pounds; narrow inlets that wander in leisurely twists far through the jungle of palm and oak and holley; the fragrance of magnolias, azaleas, and a cloud of honeysuckle bursting into bloom—this is the land that Mr. Williams writes of, a world secluded from the rest of mankind, where "young men found dreams, and old men found gentleness and peace." It is one of those beautiful islands off the coast of Georgia, that within its own narrow compass has witnessed all the changes in the slow-moving south.

In a series of dramatic tales the author sketches its history of three hundred years, each tale a good short story, each character a portrait that might well hang in the halls of southern romance. The holy man, kneeling on the sands, with Indians peering out from forest shadows; an old Chevalier sipping his Madeira and gazing far out over the ocean toward a horizon which hides his native France, while blacks croon before their cabin doors; the hard-faced planter, slave-drivers, builders. . . . And over all the spell of soft twilights, and the whispering of great oaks festooned with their Spanish moss. It would take an outsider, a Northerner, let us say, or a Frenchman or a Scotchman such as Mr. Williams has written about, to be so apperceptive of the island's beauty and languor.

Never once does he drop into the mere telling of facts. If there were research—and there must have been—it doesn't stand out like a sparsely covered skeleton. One feels no library notes here, nor retold old wives' tales. Imagination and a deep romantic feeling have made real people emerge from the shadow of the oaks. . . . The trees still stand; the sea still pounds. The island itself remains a retreat into all the beauty and gentleness of the past.

A SATURDAY LIFE. By RADCLIFFE HALL. Cape & Smith, 1930. \$2.

Is there an unlimited stock of early Radcliffe Hall novels written before "The Well of Loneliness"? "A Saturday Life" is the third to be reissued in the wake of that successful volume. Like the other two, it is relatively slight but is not uninteresting and possesses certain merits lacking in the later work. The title is derived from an Oriental legend to the effect that one's seventh incarnation on earth is a rehearsal of the main experiences of the preceding six lives, a kind of retrospective summing up of the cosmic week, in which the reincarnate spirit, sevenfold talented, has yet so many memories to revive that it cannot anywhere achieve concentrated mastery. A "Saturday life" is, at least outwardly, always a talented failure.

Sidonia Shore, Miss Hall's heroine, is apparently destined for such a career. She becomes successively absorbed in dancing, sculpture, and music; makes a brilliant beginning in each with a great show of creative power and then, each time, loses interest and leaves her tasks unfinished. But at the end she baffles fate by making a happy marriage and bringing a bouncing baby into the world. This is Will Durant's celebrated recipe for the solution of all philosophical problems, but, some way, however convincing it may be to the proud parent, it leaves the outside world skeptical. In fact, it is difficult to believe that Miss Hall herself ever took it very seriously. Sidonia on her matrimonial Sabbath is much less interesting than on her unfulfilled Saturday, and the transition is made too abruptly to be convincing.

Miss Hall, writing today, would have a firmer grasp of her central theme and would choose one more congenial to her talent. On the other hand, when she conceived "A Saturday Life" she wrote more simply and directly, without her irritating later mannerisms. Sharper detached glimpses of life have now been succeeded by a larger, more unified vision, but a less vivid one.

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The Reader's Guide

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 coöperation of readers of this department is requested for two special commissions. *M. R. P., Detroit, Mich.*, owns a log lodge in Maine on the shore of Lake Phillips: dense woods of Norway and Maine pine, spruce, oak, and soft maple are around it, boulders and big rocks all about, and one particularly big one just in front. This lodge needs a name, and the Guide, who has been asked to add this crowning feature, hastens to divide the responsibility. If you recall a "Faery Queen" quotation that haunted this column not long ago, you may remember that a lodge not unlike this was named Port of Rest, out of the lovely lines:

*O turne thy rudder hetherward awhile:
Here may thy storme-bett vessell safely
ryde;
This is the Port of Rest from troublous
toyle,
The worldes sweet In from paines and
wearisome turmoyle.*

I kept these lines, emblazoned in type-script upon a bit of notepaper, affixed by thumbtacks to the entrance of my book-room, where it seemed somehow spiritually to fit. There it remained till we were packing to move to Morningside via a storage warehouse for the summer. For this interval it was necessary to put the books into boxes, and one of the mysteries of physics is the small number of books that will go into any one box. One night as I sat upon the floor embedded in chaos and with my mouth half open upon a vow never again to own more than one dozen volumes of any description, I saw something small and white come fluttering to my feet. It was the motto, which had decided the time had come to assert itself, broken loose from its moorings, and done its best to recall me to my better self. So I have put it up again, I hope this time to stay for a long while, on a shelf in the room in Morningside where my main stock of books is housed, the room fondly known as The Brain Cell.

By the way, as Port of Rest is taken, how about Hetherward?

The second call is for books or periodicals on the technique of training fleas. A reader in a Soldier's Home wants to go into the business, and all I can tell him about is newspaper articles on the flea circus of Fourteenth Street, New York, where they tell me the trick has been handed down through several generations of the same English family.

J. C. M., Taiku, Shansi, China, is returning to America by way of India, where he will stay six weeks or more. He asks for a history, not necessarily "popular," to give a comprehensive and intelligent view of this subject; for books on India's art and literature; and for translations of poems or novels by native writers.

THIS adds a few more titles to lists recently printed: "The Oxford Student's History of India," by V. A. Smith (Oxford) must be repeated; it is now in its twelfth edition, revised. "Mahatma Gandhi's Own Story" (Macmillan) is necessary, and I would get the large and comprehensive work, "Living India," by S. Zimandi (Longmans, Green). Waldemar Bonsels's "Indian Journey" (Boni) is one of the best travel books, acceptant rather than critical in tone and rich in color. Compared with it, the latest travellers' tales—those of Maurice Dekobra in "Perfumed Tigers" (Brewer & Warren)—seem shallow enough, but partly because he makes so little attempt to see beneath the surface; he gathers a number of picturesque superficial details and permits them to stand without interferences. Dhan Gopal Mukerji's "Visit India with Me" (Dutton) takes an American friend over the country, reviewing art and philosophy by the way; it would make a good introduction for this visitor, who will also take an interest in Romain Rolland's "Prophets of New India" (Boni), studies of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Most of the books on Indian art are large and expensive, but there

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"Beauty studs his pages like stars the heavens"—New York Sun

The Realm of Matter

Book Second of "The Realms of Being"

by George Santayana

"The pages of 'The Realm of Matter' are filled with rugged life, woven consummately into language; their illuminations, shaft by shaft, raise a vision of substantial reality steeped in Rembrandtesque shadow and glow."

206 pages. \$3.50

—New York Times.

Just Published

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