

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*

L. E. R., Ogden, Utah, says a group of sixth grade boys want to edit a paper; will I give them the names of books that will help them in getting started and carrying through?

MY first impulse is to tell them to get "Gentle Julia," by Booth Tarkington (Doubleday, Doran), in which they will find a circumstantial account of the full career of *The North End Daily Oriole*, a weekly published by Herbert Illingsworth Atwater, Jr. and his partner, that nasty little Henry Rooter, with the unsolicited co-operation of his young cousin Florence. This is because something seems to tell me—it may be memory—that Herbert and his coadjutors had considerably more fun out of their unpremeditated paper than boys are likely to get from the better-looking, tidier, more efficient journal on whose inception and maintenance they will find advice in "Journalism for High Schools," by C. Dillon (Noble); "High School Reporting and Editing," by C. G. Miller (McGraw-Hill); "Writing for Print," by H. and E. Harrington (Heath); and "Student Publications," by Wells and MacCalister (Barnes).

But then I ask myself, won't they get just as much fun, though in a different way? This is an age of organization. What once we did all by ourselves and on our own steam—or under the influence of reading "Phaeton Rogers" where there was a Gob Printing Establishment—is now part of a project in which a class takes part, or of the equipment by which a school finds collective expression. The literally strong-arm methods by which the *Oriole* induced poets to pay for having their poetry printed have been superseded by decent procedure such as is indicated in "Advertising for the High School Journalist," by Schneller and Hamilton (Clio Press, Iowa City)—at least I suppose it is, for I have seen no more of this book than its title. All these are up-to-date and vouched for as sound; boys will take to them, no doubt. Mr. Earnest Elmo Calkins lately sent me the magazine published by "The Fossils," a club of eminent citizens (Edison and Ford among them), who in their youth published amateur newspapers; there is a long list of members, but when they lately entertained the boys who printed "Our President Herbert Hoover," by William John Marsh, Jr. (afterward issued by Doubleday, Doran), it was said, and I think truly, that these were the only two in the country now conducting such an enterprise. The last home newspaper with which I came in contact was edited during the war by the young son of a college professor on our street, aided by a corps of reporters operating from the old playhouse in our backyard (the one they built out of old lumber) just as in my time we built us a lodge in the vast wilderness, the boundless continuity of shade back of the chickenyard, and used it as headquarters for the *Barne Tribune*. Now every school has its press, as every soul has its song, and nationwide organizations bring their editors together for conventions at Columbia; also the papers live on, year after year, whereas they used then to flourish but one brief summer at the longest. Even if the reporters exercised tact in what they printed about the neighbors, usually obtained from the hired girls, the bright, fierce activity of that time of life turned all at once away to something else and left the paper flat and forgotten.

H. B., New York, is asked by a friend in Korea for a few books on Socialism and Communism, "just a plain, domestic, everyday sort of treatment of these subjects that will give an idea of what they are all about."

WHEN "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism" came out, Mr. John Buchan told me with a twinkle that Bernard Shaw had done for socialism by making it perfectly clear. He has certainly made it piquant; I would by all means send this book to Korea (Brentano). Send also Norman Thomas's "America's Way Out: a Program for Democracy" (Macmillan); it explains principles and their application to problems in this country and at this time. It may untangle the minds of some of those who still confuse communism and socialism; Mr. Thomas explains the Russian economic order but believes that "it cannot claim in any near future to offer peace or freedom, whatever it may do better to supply the masses with bread and economic justice." His solution is socialism, which he explains with lucidity. The rise of socialism in England in the humanitar-

ianism of the early nineteenth century and its development into the present Labor Party is described in Edward P. Cheyney's "Modern English Reform" (University of Pennsylvania Press). So many requests have come for the Russian list that I will print a longer one soon; this will include books on communism in Russia.

H. M. C., Whitby, Ontario, asks for a bibliography on polar exploration, for the average reader.

LATELY acted as sandwich man for "Bird Life at the Pole," by "Commander Christopher Robin" (Morrow); reading it in an elevated train I looked up to find the gaze of one side of the car converging upon the cover, trying to make out the name of a work making a solid citizen so immoderately to laugh. It is the best spoof since "The Cruise of the Kawa," even if the ship's mad equipment has nothing quite to match the Fatuliva bird.

But taking things seriously and taking the South Pole first, Byrd's "Little America" (Putnam) leads in popularity. The Shackleton expedition has just provided another thrilling book, "Endurance," by Commander Frank Worsley (Cape-Smith), which opens in the cabin of Shackleton's ship caught fast in Antarctic ice in 1915 and closes with the building of his cairn on the lonely beach. This book has a marvellous icebound jacket. Shackleton's "South" is published by Macmillan; S. L. Gwynne's "Captain Scott" by Harper; Amundsen's "The South Pole" by Lee Keedick; besides these we have had lately "On Wings of Science" by Byrd, by J. E. Woodman (Coward-McCann); "The Last Continent of Adventure," by W. B. Hayward (Dodd, Mead), and "The Worst Journey in the World," by A. G. Cherry Garrard (Dial), besides several reliable books for boys.

Among the North Pole books, "Andrée's Story" (Viking) is unparalleled; surely no other book is illustrated with films dormant and undeveloped for a generation with those records and relics so lately making their dramatic reappearance in the world. Still keeping to recent books, we have Borup's "A Tenderfoot with Peary" (Stokes), "The Log of Bob Bartlett," by Robert A. Bartlett (Putnam); "The Last Voyage of the Karluk," by Bartlett and Hale (Hale); "The Cruise of the Northern Light," by C. L. Borden (Macmillan); "An Arctic Rescue," by E. Lundborg (Viking); and "With the Italia to the North Pole," by Umberto Nobile (Allen), with several books for boys. Latest of all is "Under the North Pole," by Sir Hubert Wilkins (Brewer, Warren & Putnam), in which Sir Hubert tells the plan of the expedition to the Pole by submarine, with chapters by Stefansson, Sloan Danenhower, commander of the submarine, Simon Lake, and even a chapter reproduced from "Mathematical Magick," published in 1648 by Bishop Wilkins, an ancestor of the explorer, with an extraordinary plan for an "Ark for Submarine Navigations," a "ship wherein men may safely swim under water."

For both poles we have "The Polar Regions in the Twentieth Century," by A. W. Greedy (Little, Brown), Nordenskjöld's "Geography of the Polar Regions" (Amer. Geog. Soc.), and "A Brief History of Polar Exploration," by W. L. Joerg (Amer. Geog. Soc.), which includes what has taken place since the introduction of flying.

One word from experience. I may never have gone to the Pole, but I once stayed in New York City all one furiously hot summer. Keep this list at hand for summer reading. That year I preserved the balance of nature with Stefansson's "The Friendly Arctic."

H. C., New Jersey, asks for books on the history of American music, for the use of a study club.

THE latest history is "Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It," by John Tasker Howard (Crowell), a comprehensive work combining a survey of our past with an assembling of forces of contemporary composers. It would be good for a newspaper desk-library, a club collection, or a home equipment. The booklists are unusually full and up-to-date; they include in the section on jazz the recent work by Dr. Isaac Goldberg, "Tin Pan Alley" (Day), which I have read with the especial sort of satisfaction produced in a reader by genuine scholarship displayed with suitable adaptation to a light subject. This is no perfunctory and hastily assembled book,

such as I have more than once found on jazz, but a story of the song-writing and "popular music" industry in America as part of our culture and civilization, told with a blend of sympathy and cynicism. John Golden is quoted in Dr. Goldberg's book; in "Stagestruck Johnny Golden" (French) he himself relates, in collaboration with Viola Brothers Shore, a series of episodes, anecdotes, and conversations concerning not only his career as producer, but his preliminary experience in "the serious business of song-writing. I think the number of songs I have written reaches into the thousands." "America and Her Music," by Lamar Stringfield, is one of the study outlines published by the University of Carolina Press; it has a foreword by Paul Green, emphasizes folk-music, and includes lists of phonograph records for illustration.

The Montclair Library turns to this department on behalf of a borrower, who cannot identify a novel with this description:

By English author about five years ago. Scene begins with woman in suburban town on visit to Rector. She feels presence of man behind her in photograph store. He goes up into Switzerland, and she follows, drawn by his spirituality. Her fiancé or favorite niece is injured in polo—can never walk again.

They have looked through Hutchinson, Walpole, Depping, and Galsworthy, but have had no luck. If we don't know it, they will be sure there is no such book.

W. A. K., Highland Park, Mich., who asks where he can get J. U. Nicolson's "King of the Black Isles," is informed that it is published by Covici-Friede.

The New Books

Miscellaneous

(Continued from preceding page)

MELODY AND THE LYRIC FROM CHAUCER TO THE CAVALIERS. By JOHN MURRAY GIBBON. Dutton, 1931. \$5.

"Considered without relation to the music of its time, the lyric of medieval and Tudor England can be but half understood," writes Mr. Gibbon in the preface of his book. Taking as the motive for his

volume this proposition which no one can dispute successfully, he traces the musical knowledge and musical acquaintances of the poets from Chaucer to Milton and his contemporaries, and shows that in many cases music influenced or actually determined the structure of their poems.

Without wishing to detract from the value of this interesting book, it is but fair to say that its author, in several of his comments, pushes conjecture too far. We find such phrases as "it might well be," "one may surmise," "it is just possible," "it may have been"—and they do not carry conviction. For example, one is not impressed when Mr. Gibbon writes of the well known carol, "There is no rose of such virtue": "It seems to date between the years 1450 and 1460, when England was being rent by the War of the Roses. . . . Thinking then of the conflict between York and Lancaster . . . some English monk wrote this carol of another rose." Songs in which Mary was called the rose antedate the "long wars" of Lancaster and York; it needed no war to give this poet his theme.

Some of the most interesting theories that Mr. Gibbon advances are that Piers Plowman has "a musical background"; that Huguenot psalm melodies influenced the meters of Sir Philip Sidney and of Ben Jonson; and that popular dance melodies determined the rhythm of many well known poems. To prove his points, the author has included two hundred airs and his book brings together in convenient form the songs that delighted the folk and the court. This feature alone would make the book of great value. There is an informing and informal commentary on both music and poems, and the author has collected from many sources a great deal of information concerning music and composers. This is a thoroughly enjoyable book. No one interested in English lyrical poetry can afford to miss it.

WET WIT AND DRY HUMOR. By STEPHEN LEACOCK. Dodd, Mead, 1931. \$2.

This characteristic Leacockian book is compiled in friendly appreciation of Prohibition, "the greatest thing that ever happened—to Canada." It is composed of the typical familiar sketches which have not lost in freshness and wit.

"Emil Ludwig at His Best"

SCHLIEGMANN

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The life story of the great German archaeologist, who became famous for his discovery of the site of Troy, is told for the first time by Emil Ludwig, with all this distinguished biographer's intensity, picturesqueness, vigor and sympathy.

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"Emil Ludwig dug his own Schliemann out of an enormous mass of documents left by the strange man himself. Schliemann's excavations themselves were immense—not even Tur-anh-amen's grave has yielded richer gold treasure; but the crabbed, persistent personality, half madman, half genius, which Ludwig has discovered, out-tops the discoveries in this living picture."—*Lewis Gannett in The New York Herald Tribune*.

"'Schliemann' is distinguished biographical writing."—*The New York Times Book Review*.

"From another pile of dusty documents Emil Ludwig has brought forth a living, breathing story of the romantic and astonishing life of Heinrich Schliemann, the discoverer of the site of ancient Troy. It is an amazing picture which a master of biography has given us."—*The Philadelphia Public Ledger*.

"Ludwig gives a brilliant picture of the man's extraordinary career."—*The Saturday Review of Literature*.

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LITTLE, BROWN & COMPANY
Publishers, Boston

Points of View

The Necessity of Anonymity

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

Recent scholarship has been engaged in running to earth through contemporary documents the prototypes of the Canterbury pilgrims and has succeeded to its own satisfaction in "identifying" the Wife of Bath, the Nun, the Prior, and a number of other of the Canterbury Pilgrims with persons who actually lived at the time and whom Chaucer may have known. This sort of research into "sources" is the favorite game of modern scholars, whether or not the results justify the time and energy spent. Whether Chaucer actually had certain persons of his acquaintance in his mind, or, what is much more likely, a number of representatives of each type, fortunately does not affect the success of his creation, which is all that his readers are now properly concerned with. There is a kind of critic, however, in every age who is more interested in "discovering" possible parallels or "sources" in a piece of literature than in the thing itself. They would rather know who might have been Shakespeare's Dark Lady than find another immortal sonnet. So long as our simian instinct for gossip, for "personalities," persists, that will be the case. Where fate has been kind enough to cover up almost every clue to the creator's life, as with Shakespeare, this sort of literary sleuthing does little harm, although it adds little of importance to human knowledge. The beings who might have been hurt or injured by bungling ascriptions, the creators who might have been outraged by such invasion of their privacy, are long since dust, and their spirits can contemplate with serenity futile activities with their remains.

But when it happens to be the case of living or recently active human beings, it is another matter. How many persons have had their idea of Gauguin irretrievably distorted because "those who know" have asserted that the eccentric painter was the subject of a well-known contemporary novel? It is not here a question of the propriety of the novelist's attempting to lift a character from life and put it into his story. That may safely be left to the judgment of posterity, and to the author's conscience if he has one. "Revelry" is not the poor piece of fiction it is because its author took Harding and his lurid associates for his subject, but because he had too little imagination to penetrate beneath their obvious, their identifiable, their newspaper characters and thus give significance to his tale. In "Boston" most of the characters are "real people" with their own names, but if the story lives (as I think it will), it will not be because of this fact, rather in spite of it! As every artist knows, the effort to make literal portraiture is an immense handicap.

Whatever the rights of this matter may be, how far any writer may safely and properly take liberties with actual human lives, it is clear enough that reviewers and critics should not hastily gather up and publish such gossip, no matter how convinced

they may be of its correctness. A double wrong results from such publicity,—to the persons rightly or wrongly identified in the fiction and to the author if he happens to be sincerely endeavoring to interpret life, to create. Fortunately, the vast majority of readers do not know the gossip of literary circles. They can read "Point Counterpoint" for its own sake without being teased by the idea that its author has "done" certain well-known people in London of the day in his characters, which he may or may not have attempted. The novel has to stand on its own merits, as it should, as a picture of contemporary manners.

When, however, a reputable review discusses "Cakes and Ale" as a picture of the novelist Hardy and of his first wife, and hints at other likenesses, no reader can escape having his judgment tampered with, as well as his picture of a great man intolerably blurred by the smudge of baseless gossip. As a matter of fact, the Driffield of "Cakes and Ale" is not even a travesty of the young Hardy, and to associate him and his first wife with the slut Rosie Gunn of the novel is an insult to the memory of a great writer, that might well serve as cause for a suit of libel, not against the author of the novel, however ill-advised he may have been, but against the publishers of the review that has helped to spread abroad the miserable gossip. If it were not for the broadcasting of the gossip, whether true or false, few readers would realize what indiscretion or malevolence a writer was capable of, where he deliberately purposed his caricature, and the aborted creation (such as "Cakes and Ale") would speedily die. But when reviewers attach the scandal interest to a book by discussing how much of Hardy's life was actually transferred to Mr. Maugham's pages and what other contemporaries he may have sketched, a wholly fictitious and noisome notoriety is created. Nor is it any excuse that it is "common talk" among those who know, or admitted by the friends of the writer or of his victim, or that the scandal has already been exploited in other journals of literary opinion.

I am well enough aware that in a publicity-mad age whose appetite for scandal has been whetted by much so-called biography and by the fantasies of Freudian psychology applied in all departments of letters, any protest against the custom of identifying the sources of a writer's material is futile. So far as I can see the only escape for the sincere craftsman who desires to pursue tranquilly his profession undisturbed by gossip is a complete anonymity. No doubt the scandal-mongers will pursue him even there in the effort to uncover his disguise, to identify not merely his characters but himself! But he may have the good fortune to elude them, and to devote himself in peace to his task of recording his impression, both inner and outer, of the stream of life as it passes through his consciousness, transmuting there so far as the gift has been given him to do so appearances into enduring realities. I see no other way in which he can gain the necessary aloofness from impertinent comment. Otherwise, like

Hardy, who was driven by abusive and ridiculous comment into silence at the fulness of his power as a novelist, he must give over the practice of fiction as an art altogether. Why should not the novelist have the right to his material as well as the painter? Nobody goes along the line of an exhibition picking out the particular models that may have been used by the artist or discussing his subjects if he happens to paint portraits. Nor do critics of painting occupy themselves with the gossip of the studio as to who sat for what in so and so's last exhibited picture. If nothing more important can be found to say of a book than to fit probable keys to possible locks, a reputable review would do well to ignore it altogether.

ROBERT HERRICK.

Sir Roger Casement

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

In the review by Frank Monaghan in your magazine of Gwynn's book on the case of Sir Roger Casement appears the following:

"In his desperation he (Casement) sent two Irish American friends to reveal the situation to Grey and Asquith in London."

I have not Gwynn's book by me at the moment, but I cannot believe that he would be guilty of such a statement. No such charge has been made by Casement's most bitter enemies and it is absolutely without foundation. It is true that after consultation with his friends in Berlin Sir Roger sent a courier to the Sinn Féin Committee in Dublin to advise the revolutionary leaders of the *Aud* Expedition and his personal opinion that the munitions and guns supplied by the Germans were insufficient. Devoy and the Irish Revolutionary Directory in America, however, were satisfied with Germany's contribution as they knew that if the *Aud* safely landed its cargo, other munition ships would follow. In my book, "Breaking the Silence," recently published by H. Liveright, I deal with Casement's attitude toward the proposed rising in Ireland as told to me by himself during the days preceding his departure from Germany.

T. ST. JOHN GAFFNEY.

Summit, N. J.

Critics and Critics

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

A reading of Mr. Elmer Davis's "Interregnum" in *The Saturday Review* for May 16th has served to strengthen my conviction, after a fresh perusal of the American literary scene, that nearly all non-doctrinaire critics are nowadays in a rather bad way. Mr. Davis is quite clearly one of them. Several years ago this sort of critic was lamenting the "animalism," "cynicism," and "license" of contemporary American novels and plays, deploring a lack of standards and stability. When pro-Communist critics like Mr. Calverton, Mr. Melvin P. Levy, and Mr. Seaver arrive on the scene—critics with a *niveau* and standard, a touchstone that is at once definite and fixed—they sharpen their pens and start talking sentimentally about the Elizabethan song without, I think, realizing the implications of their sense. Mr. Calverton, Mr. Levy, and Mr. Seaver appear to possess a stability which most of us lack; they are firm and confident, and so we have no difficulty in knowing their stasis.

I cannot gather what is the tendency of Mr. Davis, save that he is for the song for the song's sake; but I should hazard the guess that he would not approve of radical experiments, like Mr. James Joyce's and Gertrude Stein's, with the form of the song, so to speak.

The pro-Communist platform is, I believe, incomplete, and so I disagree with it as a valid form of literary or art criticism; but I do not relegate it to the limbo of unimportant or trivial things. In fact, the stand of the pro-Communist critics is one of the most encouraging factors of our age; if nothing else, like our most exciting novels, it is significant; and it is the business of the mature critic, as I see it, to deal with every significant factor that crops up in his time, and to deal with these factors in a serious and dignified fashion consistent with a care for the free growth of literature. On a closer examination of the position of the pro-Communist literary critics, I find them liberals rather than radicals. I can perhaps make this clear very briefly.

It was Taine who said that vice and virtue are products of their time and place just as sugar and vitriol. This was the liberal scientific view in the nineteenth century. The pro-Communist view is obviously an outcome of this and corresponds today to the liberalism of Huxley and Taine. That is why I have maintained in an essay in

"Behold America" (from which Mr. Davis takes his Seaver quotation) that liberalism is not dead, as some people like to put it. A reading of Karl Marx's miscellaneous essays recently has merely bolstered me in this position.

The conservatives today in criticism are—not to put too fine a point on it—as always, the planless, impressionistic, vaguely glimmering writers like Mr. Davis. The radicals are men like Mr. Babbitt who, in the face of the imminent bankruptcy of our present money-system, take up the cudgels for order and civilized will based on a frank recognition of an economic oligarchy. The democracy-of-drift, and its reflection in literature, is passing; a planned social system—not necessarily sovietism—is evidently coming in. The pro-Communist critics (who may not themselves approve of the new system) will, however, be adopted by the new order. This leaves Mr. More and Mr. Babbitt, as well as their followers, on the oppositionist benches in the guise of noisy radicals. Perhaps this explains the brouhaha tactics of the Mr. Seward Collins in *The Bookman*.

In any case, I do not see how the unorientated and unstabilized critic like Mr. Davis has a leg to stand on.

PIERRE LOVING.

New York City.

French Proof Errors

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

I have been accused of responsibility for almost everything, but to accuse me of responsibility for the notorious inefficiency of French compositors and proof readers is almost too much. If your anonymous correspondent will take pains to look up any French historical work he will find the same situation which he takes such malicious joy in pointing out in connection with the French translation of my book.

HARRY ELMER BARNES.

Tarrytown-on-Hudson, N. Y.

[The Editor of the Review, from sad experience in the past, must agree that the criticism of typographical errors in the French edition of Mr. Barnes's book included in a letter in this column, was unwarranted when addressed personally to him.]

Saturday Reviewish

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

In the Bowling Green of May 8 Mr. Morley says he thinks it "odd that Ohio is four times as *Saturday Reviewish* as Indiana."

As a transplanted Indianian, may I suggest that Ohio's connection with Yale through the Connecticut Land Company is largely responsible for the excessive interest in the *Review*? Cleveland is notably a strong Yale town. Mr. Canby's connection with Yale and the *Review* would bring in many subscriptions.

Just fifty miles west of Cleveland the Yale influence begins to die out.

May I suggest an interesting comparison to make?

What is Cleveland's ratio of subscription to population as compared with Cincinnati's ratio of subscription to population?

I believe you will be surprised.

C. M. WAGGONER.

University School,
Cleveland, Ohio.

A Bennett Memorial

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

A paragraph in the *Saturday Review* says that the people of the Five Towns are considering a suitable memorial to Arnold Bennett. I suggest they build a good hotel. The place needs a hotel. A good hotel would attract tourists to what has now become a literary haunt, and there was nothing Arnold Bennett liked better than a good hotel.

EARNEST ELMO CALKINS.

New York City.

Walt Whitman


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

Will you announce in your magazine that I am collecting material for a book on Walt Whitman and the Civil War? I shall be grateful for any information that will lead to a complete and authentic picture of the poet during this period. I am particularly desirous of communicating with all those who possess original material, letters, or manuscripts as yet unpublished, which relate to the Civil War in any way.

CHARLES I. GLICKSBERG.

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Also recommended by Harry Hansen, J. B. Priestley, Mark Van Doren, George Jean Nathan, Clifton P. Fadiman, John Mason Brown, Arnold Bennett, Montrose J. Moses, Karl K. Kitchen, and many others.

THEATRE STREET
By Tamara Karsavina
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