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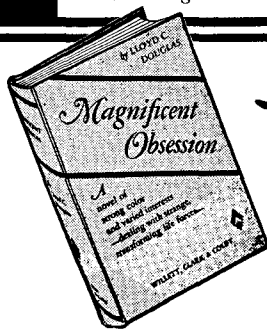
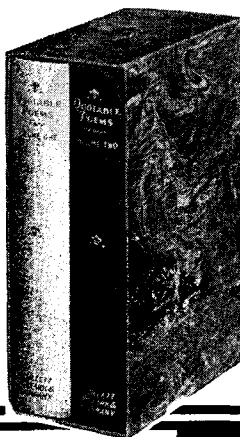
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Points of View

Hatter's Castle

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

I have just read the fourth review of "Hatter's Castle," and am more than ever disgusted with the lack of guts manifested by the present generation of reviewers.

The review I have in mind goes on and on and on about Victorian novels, the fact that the book is too long, that many of the speeches between characters could have been cut down, and finishes by telling us that the book deserves a place alongside "The Old Wife's Tale."

Bosh! There is no comparison to be made. And all this talk about Victorian novels, and the book's being too long, is just a mess of supposedly esoteric tommyrot. Reviewers go in for that stuff about two hundred per cent.

"Hatter's Castle" is the strongest book that has come out of contemporary fiction. And Mr. Cronin comes closer to the genius of Thomas Hardy than any man writing today. He has the same philosophical detachment; the same power of moving prose; the same preoccupation with the tragic aspects of life as the master. He lacks only—or he gains; it all depends on your attitude towards fiction—the coloring of his own philosophy of life. For, so far as he lets you know, he has none. The book is written with the majesty of a god. It depicts a life, and the lives affected by it. That is all. And when that is done as Mr. Cronin does it, completely, richly, fully, then the objective touch in modern literature has reached its highest point. A Hemingway, or a Faulkner, does this kind of thing. But they, and all the minor half-wits that ape them, don't do it ALL. They try to be scientific, and consequently leave out about six-tenths of the picture. Mr. Cronin, on the other hand, gives you the picture with every completeness. You don't see it, you feel it. You feel the full force of the story, the full force of Brodie's madness, the full force of tragedies inspired by his madness. But you don't know what Mr. Cronin feels about it. That, I maintain, is a difficult stunt, and it is the acme of what modern literature tries to attain. The others haven't done it, and in their failure lies our right in insisting that modern literature falls down just because there is none of the author in it. But Cronin shows us our fallacy. His tragedy has the fulness of the Greeks, and but emphasizes the fact that the moderns, could they do what they talk of, wouldn't be so modern after all.

There is but one false touch in the whole book. The happy ending for Mary and the Doctor doesn't belong. Mary has been done with, and would have better returned to London. And the Doctor should have remained the dispassionate creature he has been all along.

Brodie, though, is pictured complete. And, best of all, he is admirable. One feels no pity for him—he is solid, and even the contemptible couple who seem to have bested him would never dare return to his section of England. But all this does not belong here. Better to leave it for the reviewers who look at literature like a scientist looking at a bug, and who find the bug wanting because he isn't as they are. They're the boys for you!

BERTRAM ENOS.

Winnetka, Illinois.

Reference Books

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

Mr. Rollins says (Oct. 3) "there is little question that all reference books should be made as slim as possible," apparently by thin paper. That depends on who is to use the book, and how much. Thin paper is all right for a book to be little used, or for a private shelf where shelf-room is scanty and the book will be used only by a man who knows how to use a book. But if it is an office library and there are in the office thirty people who have nothing in common except the degree of A. B., I know by experience that the paper needs to be stiff. The thin-paper volume, even if it be only a supplement used much less than the main cyclopedia, will be rapidly crumpled into uselessness. For a book very much used, even if used by a careful man, there is the further point that thin paper wastes time in turning the leaves, because the thinner leaves are harder to separate.

As to another aspect of slimness, I am strongly in favor of reducing the number of pages in a book of reference by making the pages large. As far as shelf-room goes the matter may be (to use a not-inappropriate idiom) as broad as it is long; but the fewer the pages, the less of the drudgery of turning leaves to find the right one among so many.

STEVEN T. BYINGTON.

Ballard Vale, Mass.

War Book Reviewing

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

Is it too much to ask that would-be reviewers of war books should occasionally consult J. N. Cru's monumental "Témoins"? If they did, they might disseminate less blatherdash. What are we to think of a reviewer who, just after mentioning Barbusse as an "honestly realistic writer," speaks of a book published in 1931 but "written down . . . in 1917, long before any literary description of actual battle scenes could have gotten into print . . . ?" (Italics mine.) "Témoins" (p.556) could have told this blurbster that "Le Feu" appeared in serial form in *L'Œuvre* beginning with August, 1916, and in a volume in January, 1917. Incidentally, M. Cru has some devastating comments on the "honest realism" of both Barbusse and Remarque. Of another book, seldom mentioned in America, "Jusqu'à l'Yser," by Max Deauville, published in September, 1917, M. Cru has this to say: "Un chef d'œuvre parmi les souvenirs des combattants, aussi bien au point de vue littéraire qu'au point de vue document fidèle." M. Cru elsewhere refers to Deauville as "un des dix meilleurs auteurs de la guerre." How long is our patience to be abused by the proclamation of Barbusse and Remarque as realistic writers of war scenes? If we cannot save the word realistic from Babel, we had best consign it to the scrap pile.

Reed College.

BENJAMIN M. WOODBRIDGE.

James Gates Percival

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

I am writing a biography of the poet-scholar James Gates Percival (1795-1856), generally recognized as the most learned man of his time. As a poet, physician, linguist, and geologist he entered into correspondence with a wide circle of friends. These letters, as well as other Percival MSS and references to him in diaries and letters, I am anxious to examine. Will S. R. L. readers who are acquainted with the location of such materials address me at 1013 Yale Station, New Haven, Conn.?

HARRY R. WARFEL.

John Bailey's Books

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

Christopher Morley's mention of John Bailey reminds me that his "Claims of French Poetry" is the best introduction to that whole branch of letters, so derouting to the English mind. He stills the gibes of the partly lettered. Take his book as a text, and as a reader Belloc's "Avril."

MORRIS BISHOP.

Ithaca, N. Y.

On October 23rd and 24th, invited by the University of Virginia, a group of distinguished Southern writers meet at the university for a conference on such problems as the relation between Southern writers and their public, and particular questions relating to Southern literature in its present very interesting stage. Among the writers are to be James Branch Cabell, Ellen Glasgow, DuBoise and Dorothy Heyward, Archibald Henderson, Paul Green, Mary Johnston, Julia Peterkin, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, Laurence Stallings, Amelie Rives, Josephine Pinckney, William Faulkner, Emily Clark, Isa Glenn, Cale Young Rice, Sherwood Anderson, and Struthers Burt.

The Editors of the newly organized French Book Club announce that André Maurois, the Comtesse de Chambrun, née Longworth, and Abbé Ernest Dimnet will constitute their selecting committee. The first book will be announced and delivered in the first week of November.

The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received.

Biography

THE MYSTERIOUS MADAME: HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY. By C. E. BECHOFER-ROBERTS. Brewer & Warren. 1931. \$3.50.

It is fitting that the centenary of Madame Blavatsky's birth should be celebrated by an authentic biography of that remarkable woman—though hardly one of which she herself would have approved. During her lifetime she gave the world a number of highly romantic (and mutually inconsistent) accounts of her career, all of them, however, mentioning two early trips to India which she probably never took, study in a Tibetan monastery, which she certainly never enjoyed, and meetings with Mahatmas who never existed. The repeated exposures of her charlatanism were regarded by her followers as the customary persecution of the righteous, and in their eyes she lived and died a martyr to her religion. The truth, now first fully set forth by Mr. Bechofer-Roberts in an intensely interesting biography, was very different from this orthodox account.

Of aristocratic birth, wayward in childhood and reckless in youth, early married to a Russian general whom she almost immediately deserted, Helena Blavatsky passed those years when she was supposed to be studying theosophy at the feet of Hindu sages as the mistress first of an opera singer named Metrovich and then of the Baron Nicholas Meyendorff, by one or other of whom she had an illegitimate child; initiated by Meyendorff, an ardent spiritualist and friend of D. D. Home, in the mysteries of his religion, she became a medium, and it was as a devotee of spiritualism that she came to America in 1873 and captured the credulous Colonel Olcott as her press agent. Finding that spiritualism was not a going concern, she soon abandoned it, and with Olcott's aid organized the Theosophical Society for the study of Egyptian mysticism, gradually altered into a study of Hindu mysticism. Her spiritual "control," John King, became a "Master of Luxor," and eventually bifurcated into the two Mahatmas, Morya and Koot Hoomi, Hindu rishis of the Himalayas, by whose magical aid she claimed to perform all sorts of prestidigitary marvels. The Theosophical Society failing to prosper and her two volume mélange of plagiarisms, "Isis Unveiled," falling dead from the press, she and Olcott sailed for India in 1878. There they built up a considerable following until in 1885 an investigator of the Society for Psychical Research proved that Madame Blavatsky was guilty of habitual fraud and trickery. Ill and discredited, she returned to Europe to take up her weary fight alone—and within five years she had gained a larger following than ever! Indomitable in courage, a shrewd judge of human psychology, utterly devoid of the snuffing sanctimoniousness that usually goes with the pseudo-mystic type, she was an impressive old humbug who had come to believe her own cock-and-bull stories, and, appealing to men's ineradicable love of magic, did not appeal in vain.

OKLAHOMA CITY'S YOUNGER LEADERS. By Rex Harlow. Oklahoma City: Rex Publishing Co.

OVER FAMOUS THRESHOLDS. By Ariadne Gilbert. Century. \$2.

WITH BOB DAVIS HITHER AND YON. By Robert H. Davis. Appleton. \$2.

CHARLES LEWIS SLATTERY. By Howard Charles Robbins. Harpers. \$2.50.

THE STRANGE CAREER OF MR. HOOVER. By John Hamill. Faro. \$3.75.

BODYGUARD UNSEEN. By Vincenzo d'Aquila. Smith. \$2.50.

THE MAD MONK. By R. T. M. Scott. Kendall. \$2.

I TELL EVERYTHING. By Edward Holton James. Geneva, Switzerland: Kundig.

Fiction

CANE JUICE. By JOHN EARLE UHLER. Century. 1931. \$2.50.

Mr. Uhler chooses an interesting theme in a picturesque setting. The story of a 'Cajun boy in the Louisiana sugar cane country who is fired to devote his life to research and save the planters from impending ruin is one which has possibilities. In Mr. Uhler's hands the tale of young Couvillon becomes primarily a cheap novel of undergraduate rowdiness at Louisiana State University, with foot-

ball heroics, much drinking, and such stuff. The crude figure of the young 'Cajun does leave some sense of dignity and strength but this is but a faint impression in a welter of tawdriness. The university authorities have made an issue of "Cane Justice," by discharging Professor Uhler for misrepresenting his university.

Miscellaneous

NUDISM IN MODERN LIFE. By MAURICE PARMELEE. Knopf. 1931. \$3.

This is the revised edition of a first-hand experience with the gymnosophist cult in Germany which not only describes the characteristic life of a nudist health and recreation community but goes pretty thoroughly into the hygiene and philosophy of the custom. It is the most satisfactory account of this interesting movement which has appeared, and is abundantly illustrated with pictures, some of which are more convincing than others.

THE GLASGOW UNIVERSITY PRESS. Glasgow: Macklehorse.

PILOTING MODERN YOUTH. By William S. Sadler, M.D. Funk & Wagnalls \$3.50.

CONFESSIONS OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Everyman's Library. Dutton. 2 vols. 90 cents each.

THE BALTIC STATES. By Heze Spaull. Macmillan. \$1.

ARABIA. By Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah. Macmillan. \$1.

MEMO—GO FISHING. By Bob Becker. Bobbs-Merrill. \$4.

LABOR AGREEMENTS IN COAL MINES. By Louis Bloch. Russell Sage Foundation. \$2.

A JEW SPEAKS. By Ludwig Lewisohn. Edited by James Waterman Wise. Harpers. \$2.50.

HENLEY'S TWENTIETH CENTURY BOOK OF Ten Thousand Recipes, Formulas, and Processes. Edited by Gardner D. Hiscox. Norman W. Henley. \$4.

GREAT STORMS. By L. G. Carr Laughton and V. Heddon. Payson. \$1.25.

THE CRUISE OF THE ALERTE. By E. F. Knight. Payson. \$1.25.

STRANGE ADVENTURES OF THE SEA. By J. G. Lockhart. Payson. \$1.25.

THE CASE AGAINST BIRTH CONTROL. By E. Roberts Moore. Century. \$2.50.

THE UNION OF SOULS. By H. I. H. Alexander of Russia. Roerich Museum Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE PRINTED MAPS OF MICHIGAN. By Louis C. Karpinski. Michigan Historical Commission.

HEALTH THROUGH WILL POWER. By James J. Walsh. Stratford. \$2.

WHY BE AFRAID? By Leon Mones. Stratford. \$1.

Poetry

THE POEMS OF CATULLUS. Translated by HORACE GREGORY. With drawings by ZHENYA GAY. Covici-Friede. 1931. \$5.

The Latin text in this volume is handsomely printed, accompanied by what is less a translation than a paraphrase, and one which is not likely to appeal to those who know and love the original. Mr. Gregory, despairing of doing justice to the directness of Catullus's lyrics by the use of conventional English meters has preferred to render them into free verse, unrhymed. But he abandons the chance thus gained of greater fidelity to the original meaning by a gratuitous departure from the literal sense offensive to those who read the Latin and misleading to those who do not. A single example will show the kind of liberty taken. The line

tota domus gaudet regali splendido gaza

("The whole gorgeous house rejoices with royal treasure") is turned into "The entire house sways drunken with its splendor, echoing laughter from divine lips breaking." This is neither what Catullus wrote nor what he had in mind, and what has been gained by the change? It must be remarked, also, that the objection to conventional translation whatever its pertinence in the case of the short poems, is by no means valid in the case of the long ones. "The Lock of Berenice," for example, was itself a translation from the Greek and, so far as we can judge by the fragments of Callimachus, the merit of simplicity lay rather with the original. To assume that this experiment in versification should be treated like the brief intensity of the love poems is to misunderstand the poet. In spite of the book's sumptuous appearance neither text nor translation is entirely free from misprints.

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