

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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BOOKS OF THE FALL, II.

By AMY LOVEMAN

WE return to our mutttons. And not till we had written the sentence, and moved by a sudden desire to know the source of so familiar a quotation had looked it up in Brewer, did we remember that Harcourt, Brace had recently published what will in all probability remain for many years to come the definite edition of the works of Rabelais. It is edited by Albert Jay Nock and Catherine Rose Wilson, is in two handsome volumes, and represents a painstaking and mellow scholarship and the work of years. It should be an addition to any "gentleman's library."

Rabelais is not the only great Frenchman to receive attention this season, for there is a life also of Jean Jacques Rousseau, written by Matthew Josephson, and published likewise by Harcourt, Brace. We have an idea (probably the whole world has it with us) that the rereading of Rousseau's works in the light of present-day psycho-analytical study and general educational theory might yield some interesting results, and if only we didn't have to immerse ourselves so completely in the flood of current publications we might go back to some of the robustly bound French volumes which have slumbered on our shelves since our college days. But, alas! the present calls. Instead of Rousseau we've been reading "The Life and Letters of Edmund Gosse" (Harpers)—and very delightful letters they are, too, written with unflinching suavity and grace, and, too, with meticulous care, and constituting a veritable "Who Was Who" of late nineteenth century England—"Companions on the Trail" (Macmillan), by Hamlin Garland, which is as full of names of American notabilities as Gosse's book is of those of English personalities; "The Correspondence of Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw" (Putnam's), an interchange of epistles which, though disavowed as love letters, are couched in all the language of passion, and intersperse their extensive discussion of matters theatrical with intimate passages: "The Life of Ibsen," by Haldvan Koht (Norton), "The Diary of Madame d'Arblay" (Dutton), edited by Muriel Masfield, compiled from the extensive journals of Fanny Burney, incredibly fresh and vivacious after all the years since their writing, and an almost irresistible invitation to the perusal of "Evelina"; and, finally, "The Great Physician" (Oxford University Press), by

Edith Gittings, a life, of course, of Dr. Osler. We've been dipping, too, into Clara Clemens's "My Father, Mark Twain" (Harpers), "The Inky Way" (Putnam), by Mrs. C. M. Williamson of "Lightning Conductor" fame, a lively volume full of snapshots of noted figures, and Lizette Woodworth Reese's "The York Road" (Farrar & Rinehart), further recollections of a youth passed near Baltimore. There! We're afraid we're out of bounds again. Perhaps Miss Reese's book isn't released, as certainly William McFee's "Harbourmaster" (Doubleday, Doran) of which we wrote last week wasn't. We read the last-named book in manuscript form, and though the publisher told us it was to be postponed until January, forgot all about it when the full-grown volume came along. Our profoundest apologies.

We suppose, since we are on the subject of biography, we might as well finish off the list now instead of coming back to it later by mentioning such books as "The Great Mouthpiece" (Covici-Friede), by Gene Fowler, the life of William J. Fallon, a criminal lawyer of New York, the recounting of which naturally introduces much sensational material; Stuart W. Lake's "Wyatt Earp" (Houghton Mifflin), the biography of a frontier marshal which is virtually a chronicle of the West; Robert P. Tristram Coffin's "Portrait of an American" (Macmillan), of which the background is Maine; two lives of one of the greatest of the explorers of America, La Salle, the first by Leo V. Jacks (Scribners), and the second, entitled "The Fatal River" (Holt), by Frances Gaither, and, to swing back to the makers of literature, George R. Stewart, Jr.'s "Bret Harte: Argonaut and Exile; Memories of Yesterday" (Lippincott), by Isabella M. Alden, known to thousands of woman readers as "Pansy," and Gertrude Atherton's forthcoming "Adventures of a Novelist" (Liveright). Robert E. Spiller has written a life of James Fenimore Cooper (Minton Balch) which is a study of the novelist as critic of his time, John Drinkwater has produced his autobiography under the title "Inheritance" (Holt), and Ford Madox Ford sets forth his recollections in "Return to Yesterday" (Liveright). Under the arresting title of "A Season in Hell" (Macaulay) Jean Marie Arré has written a life of Arthur Rimbaud. There's a life of Richard Wagner (Norton), by Paul Bekker, and a volume entitled "From Bach to Stravinsky" (Norton), by David Ewen; a collection of the letters of the composer Puccini (Lippincott), edited by Giuseppe Adami; "Chopin: Collected Letters" (Knopf), edited by Henrik Opienski, and a volume entitled "Sergei Koussevitzky and His Epoch," by Arthur Lourié. That reminds us (simply because Alfred A. Knopf is their publisher) that we have as yet made no mention of two of the most colorful works of the season—autobiographies both of them, "Living My Life," by Emma Goldman, and "Memoirs of a Polyglot," by William Gerhardt. Miss Goldman, to the extent of two large volumes, recounts the events of a turbulent existence, setting forth her social philosophy in the course of her narrative, and throwing America as well as herself into relief in it. Mr. Gerhardt's book about himself is an enormously egotistical volume, but one full of vivid characterizations and lively, if impertinent, comment. It will variously irritate and amuse its readers, according to their temperaments. Finally, before we leave the subject of biography, we want to call attention to a book which Macmillan is to issue before long. It is Henri Fauconnier's "Malaisie," which in the original French won the Goncourt Prize. This record of a French civil servant in Malay has the color, the dramatic quality, and the interest in character of a novel. Indeed, it is a fascinating story, if as story it may be regarded.

And so, by way of a book that is difficult to distinguish from romance, we slide back to the fiction list which we left incomplete. We'll resume it by enumerating some volumes of short stories. First of all there are the compendiums, "The Best Short Stories of 1931," "The Best British Short Stories of 1931," both edited

by Edward J. O'Brien and published by Dodd, Mead, and "The Omnibus of Romance" (Dodd, Mead), by John Grove. Then there are the new volume in which the powerful, if macabre, art of William Faulkner has play—"These Thirteen" (Cape-Smith), and "Guests of the Nation" (Macmillan), by Frank O'Connor, a collection of tales with an Irish background which reveal a fresh and interesting gift for writing. Mention should be made, too, of Ben Hecht's "The Champion from Far Away" (Covici-Friede), Dorothy Canfield's "Basque People" (Harcourt, Brace), and Damon Runyon's "Guys and Dolls" (Stokes), to which anyone who is curious about Broadway slang should turn at once.

Broadway slang—slang of any sort, to cast no aspersions upon a particular street—puts us in mind of thugs, and they in turn suggest to us crime, and crime, it goes without saying, spells detective stories. As usual there is a long array of mystery tales on which to draw; from them we select the following partly as a result of our own reading and partly after studying their jackets: "Suspicious Characters" (Brewer, Warren & Putnam); "Vanderlyn's Adventure" (Cape-Smith), by Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes (we wish we had time to read it, for Mrs. Lowndes is always good); "Dead Man Inside" (and a grand title it is), by Vincent Starrett (Doubleday, Doran), "Mystery in the English Channel" (Harpers), by Freeman Wills Crofts; "The Boathouse Riddle" (Little, Brown), by J. J. Conington; "Murder in the Cellar" (Morrow), by Louise Eppey and Rebecca Gayton; "Murder in Four Degrees" (Knopf), by J. S. Fletcher; "The Shadowed Fool" (Smith), by Henry James Forman; "The Dutch Show Mystery" (Stokes), by Elery Queen; "The Murder at Hazlemoor" (Dodd, Mead), by Agatha Christie, and "Pontifex, Son & Thorndyke" (Dodd, Mead), by J. Austin Freeman.

If we didn't mention Sigrid Undset's "Wild Orchid" (Knopf) before when we were talking of translations we certainly ought to have done so, and do so now with the statement that unlike the books which preceded it this is a novel of present-day life. There is to be a sequel to this tale.

And now, when we shall have mentioned George S. Hellman's "Peacock's Feather" (Bobbs-Merrill), William Fitzgerald's "The Old Crowd" (Longmans, Green), Elizabeth Bowen's "Friends and Relatives" (Dial), William M. John's "Every Wise Woman" (Sears), Upton Sinclair's "The Wet Parade" (Farrar & Rinehart), W. R. Burnett's "The Silver Eagle" (Dial), and Floyd Dell's "Love without Money" (Farrar & Rinehart), we shall consider ourselves finally quit of fiction. So on to history, a small group, but one that contains "The Fiery Epoch" (Bobbs-Merrill), by Charles Willis Thompson; "The Epic of America" (Little, Brown), by James Truslow Adams, a fascinating survey of American history from its beginning to the present day; W. J. Ghent's "The Early Far West" (Longmans, Green), and, to flit nonchalantly from one age and one continent to another, Grant Showerman's "Rome and the Romans" (Macmillan). Bobbs-Merrill has issued a volume that has a rather unusual interest in that it gathers together recollections of plantation negroes of Civil War days. "Old Massa's People," as Mr. Orland Kay Armstrong calls his book, presents material which the passage of but a few more years would make it impossible to procure, and interesting material it is.

There are vivid byways that the lover of history can follow in Alvin F. Harlow's "Old Bowery Days" (Appleton) and "The Big Bonanza" (Bobbs-Merrill), under which title C. B. Glasscock has traced the spectacular career of the Comstock Lode, or if he would read not of his own America but of foreign lands he can find satisfying works in Paul Cohen-Portheim's "England, the Unknown Isle" (Dutton), G. J. Renier's "The English: Are They Human?" (Cape-Smith), Karl Silex's "John Bull at Home" (Harcourt, Brace), Waldo Frank's "America Hispana" (Scribners), Sherwood Eddy's "The Challenge of the East" (Farrar & Rinehart), and Count Carlo Sforza's "European Dictatorships" (Brentanos).

Russia still bulks so large in the interest of the writing fraternity (and we take it they are a good index to the taste of the general public) that we have decided to give that state a paragraph quite to itself. If you would first build up a background for yourself before you begin to read of present-day Russia there's M. R. Pokrovsky's "History of Russia" (International) to be had and Emma Cochran Pompadine's "Russia—My Home" (Bobbs-Merrill) to show you what life in the Czarist Empire was like. Then there's Gleb Botkin's "The Real Romanovs" (Revell), from which you can get an idea of how their rulers appeared to those who were in contact with them, and "The Kinsmen Know How to Die" (Morrow), by Sophie Botscharsky and Florida Pier, which depicts from the angle of a Red Cross nurse the manner in which troubled Russia conducted itself in war. And if you would get an insight into present-day Russia, Liam O'Flaherty's "I Went to Russia" (Harcourt, Brace) ought to help you to the knowledge you desire as Margaret Bourke White's "Eyes on Russia" (Simon & Schuster), with its magnificent photographs, ought further to do. As to some of the ramifications of Soviet policy you can find out about them in Victor A. Yakhontoff's "Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East" (Coward-McCann). If, finally, for good measure you'd like to read a Russian novel take Leonid Leonov's "The Thief" (Dial) or, to go back to a classic, Tolstoy's "Peace and War," which the Modern Library has just issued as one of its new Giant series.

And now, heaven be praised, we are on our last lap, and as we look over the list of titles we wish to include in it we discover that most of them tell their own tale and require no elucidation from us. They include, for instance, "Philosophy and Civilization" (Minton, Balch), by John Dewey, "Graft in Business" (Vanguard), by John T. Flynn, and "On Understanding Women" (Longmans, Green), by Mary R. Beard, a study of woman's place in history. And now we see that perhaps after all we'll have to do some commenting else otherwise you might not know that Russell Lord's "Men of Earth" (Longmans, Green) is a discussion of the American farmer based upon the experience of forty men and women, or that Vance Randolph's "The Ozarks" (Vanguard), is an investigation into an American survival of primitive society, or that Ernest Gruening's "The Public Pays" (Vanguard) is a study of power propaganda. "Pegasus Perplexing" (Viking), by Le Baron Russell Briggs, as all readers of the *Saturday Review* know, is a volume of charades, and "The New Believe It or Not" (Simon & Schuster) is like Robert L. Ripley's earlier book of the kind, a collection of amazing bits of information.

In our effort to make haste we almost skipped entirely the list of books in the field of belles lettres to which we wished to call attention. And it would have been a pity to have done so since it contains such volumes as Simeon Strunsky's "The Rediscovery of Jones" (Little, Brown), Ernest Rhys's "Everyman Remembers" (Farrar & Rinehart), Agnes Repplier's "Times and Tendencies" (Houghton Mifflin), Sherwood Anderson's "Perhaps Women" (Liveright), "The Gardeners Friend and Other Pests" (Stokes), by George S. Chappell and Ridgely Hunt, "Joel Chandler Harris" (University of North Carolina), edited by Julia Collier Harris, and "The Tempo of Modern Life" (Boni), by James Truslow Adams.

In the nick of time we have remembered not to forget that Esmé Wingfield-Stratford's "They That Take the Sword" (Morrow), a survey of the war spirit through the ages, is a book full of meat, and that in "Cold" (Brewer, Warren, & Putnam) Larry Gould, scientist of the Byrd expedition, recounts experiences in the Antarctic.

We are done, until the Christmas list descends upon us. "For this relief much thanks."



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Readers of *The Saturday Review* are to be congratulated. JOHN MISTLETOE, parts of which were first read with enthusiasm in these pages, has now arrived in England to the tune of such words as these:

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