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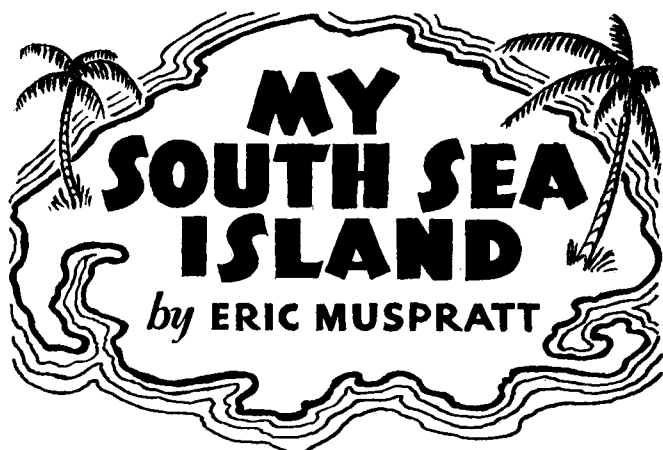
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## The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the choice of books should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review*. As for reasons of space ninety percent of the inquiries received cannot be answered in print, a stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed for reply by mail.

S. S. J., New York, asks for a book on the Einstein theory.

THE Universe: from Crystal Spheres to Relativity," by Frank Allen (Harcourt, Brace), has a brief explanation, in non-technical language, of the systems of Copernicus, Ptolemy, Pythagoras, Descartes, and Newton, leading to an explanation of the theory of relativity in words that a general reader should be able to understand. It is the best of the popular books about Einstein, because it presents essentials, relates them to previous concepts, and does not fictionize. The book began as a lecture in the University of Manitoba, so enthusiastically received that its printing was indicated.

K. H. M., Philadelphia, suggests for the list on historic Ohio a book I named for the student of pioneer life, in a later issue of the Guide: "Do add 'Early Days in Ohio,'" she says, "a story of a pioneer family (Dutton); from Vermont to the settlement that was to be the city of Cleveland travelled the Clark family, father, mother, and three children. They all help to build the log cabin, make soap and maple sugar, hunt, and trade with the Indians. The first school is epoch-making and the coming of the first preacher an event of importance. It has strong local appeal, but the story of the children's fun and work is so naturally told that it interests children in other parts of the country." L. S., Claremont, Calif., wishes me to add to the reply to H. G. Y. in the July 4 issue a German book to which his attention has been called by a friend in Berlin, a commentary on America called "Kleine Liebe zu Amerika," published in 1930. *The Newark Public Library, Newark N. J.*, has sent out a reading-list called "What Will You Read This Summer?" which seems to touch about every sort of reading matter likely to be taken to the country or enjoyed at home during the hot weather; it is to help in the choice of the ten books its readers may keep out on a summer card from June to October, but anyone would find it interesting. Better send an addressed envelope for one.

H. L. M., Charlotte, N. C., asks for books that discuss the revolutionary spirit in Russian literature. "Voices of October," published not long ago by the Vanguard Press, outlines the course of Soviet art and literature from the outbreak of the Revolution to the present time. It is valuable both for information on moving pictures, literature, and music, and for its treatment of these as indications of the intrinsic nature of contemporary Russian life. A valuable book for the period before Lenin is M. Olgin's "The Soul of the Russian Revolution" (Holt); this is now out of print, but many libraries have it.

L. A. E., Penn Yan, N. Y., asks for books about the Medici. She says G. F. Young's interesting conclusions on the family and on Catherine de' Medici in particular "differ so much from the generally accepted ones yet seem to have good foundation." To begin with, Young's "The Medici" is now one of the prize bargains of the Modern Library; this is the only book I know—in English at least—to trace the full course of the family fortunes. The finest biography of a single member of the family is Paul Van Dyke's "Catherine de' Medici" (Scribner) which certainly does upset some of the conclusions about her, in a manner both scholarly and ingratiating, Catherine also appears in "The Enchantress," by Helen Henderson (Houghton Mifflin), an admirable biographical study of Diane de Poitiers. The most recent additions to the family's literature are David Loth's "Lorenzo the Magnificent" (Brentano), a biography, and a novel by John Oxenham, "The Hawk of Como" (Longmans, Green), whose hero is Gian Giacomo who held the castle of Como in medieval times; this romance has reliable biographical detail. Edward Armstrong's "Lorenzo de Medici" (Putnam) is one of the favorite series of Heroes of the Nations. Small, Maynard published Brinton's "Golden Age of the Medici, 1434 to 1494." Cecily Booth's "Cosimo I, Duke of Florence" (Macmillan) is a massive work, an importation.

E. S. N. D., Chester, Nova Scotia, is especially interested in gourds and their use in different countries, and says that "as the bulletin of the Metropolitan gave the matter some prominence two years

ago, I am sure you will know something." But one of the features of this department endearing it to its clients is that it doesn't always know something, and in this case it knows no more than it has been able to wring from encyclopedias and dictionaries. From the Century Dictionary, for instance, I learn that there were dice called—in Shakespeare's day and earlier—gourds, because the craps shooter of the period hollowed them out and banefully adjusted their balance. But this is not much for an inquiring mind. L. B., Columbus, O., asks how to pronounce Agnes Repplier's last name, saying that "Time added a note to its review of 'Mère Marie of the Ursulines' to the effect that it was pronounced to rhyme with play, and I had always heard Rep-leeer." I wrote to Miss Repplier at once, and she replied "We pronounce the name in two syllables, as Rep-pleer, with the accent on the first. L. B. goes on "For a long while I have been wanting to ask you about the pronunciation of ate. I know the Oxford Dictionary gives et, and Fowler tells us to say et. But do really well-educated English people pronounce it thus? It does seem too queer." On general principles, when Fowler tells you to say something, just you say it; it saves time. In this case, it will not make you popular in your own land; I am told that a writer stating in print that a certain popular politician said et was violently scolded, in letters to the papers, for aspersions on their hero's parts of speech. After all, you have but to keep on saying ate even in the teeth of Mr. Fowler, long enough, and the sound will shift, pronunciation being like that. Who now makes tea rhyme with play, as George Washington did? And at the recent gladiolus show solemn announcement was made that after years of struggling against the grain to say glad-eye—oh-lus, accent had officially reverted to the penultimate. Why, even in Mr. Fowler's own country there is a certain uncertainty on the sound of that machine into which you drop twopence for enough hot water for a bath. When one of these was lately the subject of litigation at King's Bench, says the London Morning Post: "When counsel and a witness pronounced geyser differently, Mr. Justice Hawke said: 'Guyser, geezer, or gazer?' In the course of a fairly long life I have heard it called all three." J. S. C., Rockport, Mass., a distant relative of Frances Pope Humphrey, whose "Children of Old Park's Tavern" has been lately under discussion here, writes that as a child Frances Pope lived in the house there described, which used to be a tavern, near Plymouth, Mass.; her later years were spent at Stratford-on-Avon.

R. G., Auburn, N. Y., is interested in books about Java and thereabouts, especially the island of Bali. Hickman Powell's "The Last Paradise" (Cape Smith) is one of those travel books that provide literary escape. It is about the island of Bali; you come to believe that life there is even more desirable than in Stuart Chase's Mexico; you have also drawings by Alexander King, and photographs to prove that there is really such a place. Then there is "Cross Roads of the Java Sea," by Hendrik de Leeuw (Cape-Smith), in which a learned and restless Dutchman makes his way about Borneo, Java, Celebes, Sumatra, and Bali, seeing all sorts of strange and marvellous things. This has a bibliography, a very learned one; the book itself is for anyone interested in this part of the world. Hubert Banner's "Romantic Java" (Lippincott) is a large, carefully illustrated volume on life and customs, art and history of "a little known island, remarkable for its arts, decorative and dramatic, and for its natural beauty and the richness of its resources." "In Java," by J. C. Van Dyke (Scribner), is a set of travel sketches of the islands of the Dutch East Indies, brief, vivid, and stimulating. And so much of Java came to the present Colonial Exposition at Paris that its handbook should be included.

"Love at Sea," by Melis Stoke (Dutton), is a recently published novel describing passage to Java on a Dutch steamship with the usual tropical ship's company; it tells its story through a series of spoken thoughts on the part of the various passengers. But the novel that nailed down this part of the world in my mind was "Old People and Things that Pass," by Louis Couperus (Dodd, Mead), one of the world's most nerve-racking thrillers, for its thrills are sinister as well as masterly.



## The New Books

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

### Belles Lettres

- POETRY IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND. By *Jean Stewart*. Harcourt, Brace.  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE BEOWULF AND THE ÆNEID. By *Tom Burns Haber*. Princeton University Press. \$4.  
A PREFACE TO MORALS. By *Walter Lippmann*. Macmillan. \$1.  
WHEN THE SWANS FLY HIGH. By *F. W. Borcham*. Abingdon. \$1.75.

### Biography

- THE STORY OF PRINCESS ELIZABETH. By *Anne Ring*. Dutton. \$2.  
NEWSPAPER DAYS. By *Theodore Dreiser*. Liveright. \$5.  
THE LIVES OF THE TWELVE CÆSARS. By *Suetonius*. Modern Library. 95c.  
RAINER MARIA RILKE. By *Federico Olivero*. Cambridge, Eng.: Heffer.  
HENRY CHARLES LEA. By *Henry Sculley Bradley*. University of Pennsylvania Press. \$5.  
FOLKWAYS IN THOMAS HARDY. By *Ruth A. Firor*. University of Pennsylvania Press. \$3.  
THROUGH FOUR AMERICAN WARS. By *General William H. Bisbee*. Meador.

### Fiction

- GIVE HIM THE EARTH. By *RUPERT CROFT-COKE*. Knopf. 1931. \$2.50.

At first we are led to believe that Mr. Croft-Cooke is primarily interested in developing a contrast between the pleasant, warm life of Argentina and the dull, cramped ways of Greycaster, an English provincial city. Mary, who had gone out to Argentina, borne a son, and been widowed, at the beginning of the novel is returning to England with the now adolescent boy, Bruce. Many of the succeeding pages are devoted to the discomforts and disillusionments of Mary and Bruce in Greycaster. But about halfway through the novel the author's notion of contrasting the two civilizations goes up the chimney, and the rest is a mixed, rather aimless narrative, too near melodrama to be matched properly with the earlier chapters. Bruce's progress towards an incestuous relationship with his half-sister, and Mary's attempted suicide seem situations particularly false to what Mr. Croft-Cooke apparently intended as the tone of the novel.

But while we are reading we have our rewards. Mr. Croft-Cooke writes pleasantly and with an intelligent eye for the significant small things of life. He can be humorous or satirical or bitter and lead us along with him. Through his eyes we sense vividly the sun of South America, the grayness of England; very likely the contrast is too sharp, but at any rate it is persuasive. In his minor characters he has his real triumphs: Aunt Pittory is a memorable figure, and hardly less skilful are Mouse, Tito, Aunt Eileen, Arthur Groom, and Mr. Edgar Ffoffel. It is a pity that the two central figures, Mary and Bruce, do not have sharper definition; and furthermore, they lack momentum and direction. Probably Mr. Croft-Cooke will be much more sure of himself in succeeding novels than in this, his first; it is reassuring to perceive that his qualities of mind and heart are those of the proper novelist.

- THE IRISH BEAUTIES. By *E. BARRINGTON (L. ADAMS BECK)*. Doubleday, Doran. 1931. \$2.50.

The Misses Elizabeth and Maria Gunning are the central figures in this historical novel. The Gunnings were the impecunious young ladies who in the mid-eighteenth century came from Ireland to conquer London, and who remained to make for themselves fantastically successful marriages and subsequent social careers. E. Barrington follows respectfully the historical facts, except, perhaps, in the black and white contrast that she draws between the merits of Elizabeth and the faults of Maria. Horace Walpole appears frequently in the novel, and much is made of his Strawberry Hill.

Though the rise of the Gunnings does not provide the most usable material for a novel, E. Barrington has managed to create a certain amount of suspense and has built up a moderately effective historical background. The tone and the manner of the narrative are surprisingly ingenuous, however, and not particularly beguiling to the discriminating reader of today.

- DORETTE: A Post-War Romance of the Land of the Troubadours. By *ANDRÉ LAMANDÉ*. Translated from the French by *A. A. DANFORTH*. Boston: Vinal. 1931. \$2.

A young French soldier stationed at Colbentz marries a German girl, and, in spite of his father's opposition, takes her back to

his home in southern France. Naturally there is friction and jealousy in the old home, but things eventually right themselves. All is apparently going to end happily when suddenly M. Lamandé has the German girl's husband and only child killed off in an automobile accident. This reversal of fortune is so thoroughly pointless as to be annoying to the reader. Up to that time, the tale has been pleasant enough and enlivened by a few interesting characters. Unfortunately, the translation is downright incompetent, often slipping over the border into unconscious humor.

- DERMOTTS RAMPANT. By *STEPHEN MCKENNA*. Dodd, Mead. 1931. \$2.50.

It is an unfortunate truth that a novelist's interest in his subject often outlasts that of the reader. This is the case in Stephen McKenna's latest work. The plan of "Dermotts Rampant" is obvious. The book aims to tell the story of two families who in the course of four generations exchange positions. The Dermotts fled Ireland in the time of the Great Famine. They settled in England with neither a penny nor a good word to bless their name. At the same period the Fletchers enjoyed estates and prestige and titles. By the time the story reaches the present day the Dermotts are wealthy and powerful and have entered the peerage, while the Fletchers have lost almost everything but their consciousness of innate superiority. The feud between the families, standing as they do for opposed ideals, furnishes the Montagu-Capulet twist for the love between a Dermott son and a Fletcher daughter. But the story trails slowly after the social theories of the author, and few of the characters awaken out of their roles as examples of types and trends. The book has, of course, many of the sure touches inevitable in a novel by Mr. McKenna, but these do not predominate.

- THURSDAY APRIL. By *ALBERTA PIERSON HANNUM*. Harpers. 1931. \$2.50.

The mountain people of the South, with their highly individualized and indigenous folkways and the picturesque quality of their speech, present a fertile field for the activities of the novelist. But they present, also, a temptation. It is easy, in writing of these simple, out-of-the-world, close-to-the-earth people to fall into the sentimental or the too dramatic attitude. They are different enough, strange enough to be out of range of ordinary standards of realism, with the result that their portrayals are prone to run a little and a little too low in the emotional scale.

Alberta Pierson Hannum, in her story of the diminutive, spirited Thursday April Duly, has for the most part avoided the obvious pitfalls of the field, but she has in several places and in the end trod dangerously close to them. Thursday April, with a deep love of the beautiful and the unmaterial goods of life, is the wife of an upright and thrifty, but narrow and unresponsive, husband. She is the mother of eleven children, and poverty closes around her as formidably as the mountains. Her daily fight to bring a little love and loveliness into the family life forms the backbone of the novel, but the casual doings of the little community, the colorful secondary characters introduced, and the rich folk quality of the book are what make it, slight though it is, a regional canvass that many will enjoy.

- A WOMAN, 49. By *FRANCIS WALTON*. Farrar & Rinehart. 1931. \$2.50.

Understatement and indirection have their place in writing, but Mr. Walton has overdone them; and when he tries to make himself fully explicit he becomes entangled in long and involved sentences that put too great a burden on the reader. His woman of forty-nine has been a legend, an institution, ever since her wedding night twenty-seven years ago when she murdered her husband. He had been, it would seem, a lusty specimen of the last Wild West days of a California city about to turn respectable; and the lethal bullets pumped into him by his wife had set off the coup d'état by which respectability triumphed over the frontier.

But after twenty-seven years that triumph of the cause of right was ancient history, people had forgotten the issue, and were beginning to be bored with the woman who embodied it; and Julia Gentle, who had been an institution all her life, tried to become a person, and discovered that she did not know how. To make a reader sit up

(Continued on next page)

## Notable New Scribner Books

An amazing revelation

A stirring biography

### As a Jew Sees Jesus by Ernest R. Trautner

author of "Unravelling the Book of Books," etc.

Here a prominent rabbi breaks the strange silence that has caused so much conjecture among Christians and dramatically sums up the attitude of his own race toward Jesus.

228 pages. \$2.00

### La Salle by Leo V. Jacks

author of "Xenophon Soldier of Fortune," etc.

The life story of the gallant and adventurous Frenchman who explored the Mississippi Valley and perished at the hands of his own men, with a fine reconstruction of those times.

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## The Coming Forth by Day of Osiris Jones

by Conrad Aiken

author of "John Deth," etc.

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This novel is a rich tapestry of American family life on a Kentucky manor—Penhally—from 1831 to the present time. Around the central theme—the enmity of two brothers—there are grouped numberless enthralling characters, moving through a sequence of scenes, tragic, eventful and gay.

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The first novel by the author of "The Road to Rome." A stirring novel of the Crusades, with modern implications.

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The 58 stories and 681 pages of this Scribner Omnibus Book are packed with the laughter that never grows old.

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—HARRY HANSEN, N. Y. World-Telegram. \$2.50

### Susan Spray by Sheila Kaye-Smith

"The most successful novel that Miss Kaye-Smith has written since 'Joanna Godden' and its central figure is to me a more interesting and exciting creation than Joanna herself."—N. Y. Herald-Tribune. "The climax of Sheila Kaye-Smith's career."—HENRY SEIDEL CANBY in the Book-of-the-Month Club News. SEPTEMBER SELECTION OF THE BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB.

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### John Henry by Roark Bradford

"Beautifully done—a genuine translation of folk-lore into art," says The N. Y. World-Telegram of this story of a black Hercules by the author of 'Ol' Man Adam an' his Chillun.' SEPTEMBER SELECTION OF LITERARY GUILD. 25 wood-cuts by J. J. Lanke.

\$2.50

### Man's Own Show: Civilization

by George A. Dorsey. SINCLAIR LEWIS says: "As a fellow student of the puzzles of human behavior, I salute his last great excursion. In this new book he has given us even more than in WHY WE BEHAVE LIKE HUMAN BEINGS."

977 pages. \$5.00

### The Opening of a Door by George Davis

"Worthy to rank with the best of its time. Here, from amid the multiplicity of new novels, is one to buy, to experience, and to preserve. With its appearance a new American novelist of importance swims into our ken."—N. Y. Times.

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### Thursday April by Alberta Pierson Hannum

"An enchanting story of simple and curiously intense mountain folk, filled with rich idiom and trenchant phrases, startling for its poetic magic. A rich tale."—N. Y. Herald Tribune.

\$2.50

### The Prince of Scandal by Grace E. Thompson

A delightfully outspoken picture of George IV, his amours and his mistresses. "It is an almost unbelievable tale."—The Outlook. "Such impertinence in forcing the muse of history to curtsy to the witch of tattle is enjoyable and rousing."

—LAURENCE STALLINGS. \$4.00