

A Letter from London

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

I HAD the great pleasure and privilege of seeing Mr. George Moore on the eve of his eightieth birthday. He was one of a number of writers gathered together at the opening by the Prince of Wales of the charming "Age of Walnut" loan exhibition, which will run for some weeks at Sir Philip Sassoon's London house. Mr. Moore looks better and younger than he did some years ago, and he is actually at work on a new novel which he pretends he hopes will be his last. I gather the story is laid in the England of forty to fifty years ago, and will not be of what is now considered full novel length. He told me of an incident which is to figure in a certain scene of his story, the details of which were clear in my mind. I said to him, "You did not tell me of this incident when we last spoke of your story." He chuckled as he answered, "I only thought of it last night!" It is curious that a man with so extraordinary, vivid, and fertile an imagination should declare that "Memory is the Mother of the Muses." I cannot help thinking that all writers who do me the honor of reading this Letter will feel both delighted and relieved to hear that though when George Moore came out of a nursing home after a serious operation two years ago, the doctors told him that his memory, as well as other intellectual faculties, was bound to fail, in a measure, after such an illness as he had had, he actually began at once rewriting "Aphrodite in Aulis," that now most perfectly written book! Even more remarkable in some ways is the fact that he has again attacked what can only be regarded as a study of modern love and life, for such undoubtedly will be the book on which he is now working.

To return to the "Age of Walnut," even there, as indeed with almost everything connected with the wondrous past, literature, if not in one form, then in another, is always breaking in. Thus, among the silver shown is a beautiful silver rose-water dish and ewer which belonged to Pepys, and in which, as he was certainly physically a very clean man, we may be sure he very often laved his hands. Pepys must have had a pretty fancy in silver and silver-gilt, for there are two other objects which belonged to him—a two-han-

dled gilt cup and cover and a silver-gilt tazza.

At a time when every French child trembled at the name of "Malbrouck," as in days to come every British child was to be threatened with the spectre of "Boney," there ran across the continent of Europe a rumor that the Duke of Marlborough had been killed at Malplaquet. From that rumor was born one of the great ballads of the world: "*Mal-brouck s'en va-t-en guerre*," still sung in French nurseries to its famous tune. A leading fan painter of the day had time, before the tale was known to be untrue, to paint and make a replica of Marlborough's funeral! One of these fans passed into the possession of Queen Louise of Prussia. The other made its way to England, and is in the exhibition. It shows the great soldier's coffin, preceded and followed by his staff. Under the bier runs his spaniel. At the back of the fan are inscribed not only the twenty-two couplets celebrating the hero's decease, but also several bars of the tune. Yet another exhibit which may perhaps not be regarded as appertaining to literature, but which would certainly delight any autograph collector, is an I. O. U. written by Charles the Second at Brussels. This curious piece of paper is lent by a descendant of the man to whom the I. O. U. was made out, this having been the royal debtor's good friend, Sir Michael Graham.

What is the best training for a novelist? That surely is a question of great interest to both critics and writers. Again and again it seems to me to have been proved that the best training of all for the aspiring creative artist in words is that acquired in practical journalism.

The latest example of this fact, if it be a fact, in this country is that of Kate O'Brien, whose novel, "Without My Cloak," surely shows that a new novelist in this great tradition has been revealed. I understand that Miss O'Brien came from Ireland straight to the *Manchester Guardian*, where she worked under the late C. E. Montague, a great journalist and a novelist of distinction, as all those who have read "A Hind Let Loose" will agree. Then she spent a certain time in Paris as a special correspondent, came

back to England, and wrote a play, "Distinguished Villa," earning her livelihood, meanwhile, as a journalist. She is now engaged on another novel dealing, it is said, with the same group of characters which so impressed the imaginations of her readers in "Without My Cloak."

Another new writer recently launched by Messrs. Heinemann, is the author of that curious, original, novel, "The Whicharts." Miss Noel Streatfeild is the daughter of the late Bishop of Chichester, hence perhaps the reason for her going to the Apocrypha for the title of her next book, which is to be called "Because of Barouch." At one time many British novelists searched the Bible for titles. In fact, the Bible and Shakespeare were the favorite hunting grounds of Victorian story writers. It need hardly be added that they are rich treasure houses of brilliant, descriptive phrases, especially the kind of phrase that tells far more than the mere words appear to imply.

One of the shrewdest women of her time, that Charlotte, Princess Palatine, who was a sister-in-law of Louis the Fourteenth, and who left by far the most vivid and occasionally Rabelaisian, account of the Versailles of her day, once said in old age that she now knew all written history to be one long lie. I have sometimes wondered how far that is true concerning much which was and is now being written concerning the private lives of the great literary figures of the past. In "The Laird of Abbotsford" Dame Una Pope-Hennessy has discovered new material which gives the lie direct to all that Lockhart implied, in his great biography, concerning Walter Scott's wife. In Dame Una's book "little French Charlotte" comes alive as a very different sort of person from what I, for one, supposed her to have been. Her son-in-law, being traditional in that, if in nothing else, evidently hated his wife's mother. Scott's latest biographer regards "The Bridal of Triermain" as an autobiographical poem. If that be true, and she gives good reasons for her belief, then away fly the pathetic, sentimental tales of his early love affairs, and it is proved, for aye, that the woman he loved with passion, and over long years, was none other than his own wife. "The Laird of Abbotsford" contains other new facts which will interest Scotsmen all over the world.

A London publisher justly famed for picking out, as if by some strange instinct, not only big sellers, but fine first

novels, tells me that he is enraptured with a manuscript which has just reached him entitled, "Nymph Errant." The author, James Laver, startled and delighted at any rate a section of the reading world with an amusing, daring *pastiche* of "The Rape of the Lock," called "A Stitch in Time." Copies of the large, but only limited edition published at 3/6d, (a little under a dollar, old rate,) at once became worth seven times as much in the second-hand market. This was not because the price was forced up by those who wanted to keep it with a view to profit, but because purchasers wanted to read it.

The book to which I personally look forward most of all this next autumn will be "The Letters of D. H. Lawrence," edited by Aldous Huxley. The two volumes will contain 350,000 words, and will cover the whole of Lawrence's far too short life. The great novelists of the world have often been great letter-writers as well as prolific story tellers. This was certainly true of Flaubert—some of the most delightful letters in the French language are those he addressed to George Sand when they were both well on in years. Among contemporary writers Arnold Bennett was a prodigious letter-writer. He really seemed to delight in using his pen, and would write to complete strangers as well as to intimate friends with reckless prodigality.

The second volume of Sir William Rothenstein's "Men and Memories" is to deal with more writers than did his first really delightful book. Wells, Conrad, Hudson, Galsworthy, W. H. Davies, James Stephens, and Max Beerbohm, who to my mind is an even better writer than artist, will all be mentioned, and not only mentioned, as is too much the habit nowadays, but revealed in their manner as they worked and talked.

Apropos of forthcoming books of memoirs, a volume which will arouse delightful anticipation in, I cannot help thinking, many American as well as British readers, will be shortly published by Major Maurice Baring. In my opinion the book will suffer a serious disability from its title. Though in a sense a "follow-up" to "The Puppet Show of Memory," which contained one of the best accounts of a delightful childhood ever written, it is to be called "Lost Lectures!" To all people the word "lecture" connotes something serious, and to a great number of people something dull. It would be interesting to know whether misguided publisher or misguided author was responsible for this extraordinary choice of title. Fortunately, books often suffer a sea change, and I cannot help thinking that the American publisher of the book will find some title really descriptive of its amusing contents.

We quote the following from the prospectus of the forthcoming Malvern Festival in England:

"For the second time we survey English drama down the centuries gaining in the space of one week a slender but continuous outline of its development since Tudor days. The only one of these plays performed in our 'Five Centuries of English Drama' last year is 'Ralph Roister Doister.' Each performance of it this time will be preceded by 'The Play of the Wether,' a semi-pagan Interlude which takes the place of last year's morality, 'Hick Scornor.' Then, in nightly succession, we pass from that satirical comedy 'The Alchemist,' more widely known as literature than as a stage piece, to the tragedy of 'Oroonoko,' which saw over a dozen revivals during the eighteenth century, but which has not been performed in a public theatre since 1829. In 1695, when 'Oroonoko' was written, the English Colonies had grown sufficiently established for London dramatists to take note of them; so here, with the action laid in the West Indies of that day, we can watch the life and behavior of planters and buccaneers nearly a hundred years before the United States proclaimed the Declaration of Independence. A generation later, and we are well into that eighteenth century which enjoyed 'Oroonoko' so much, and shall see on the Thursday night what it could do for itself. Tom Thumb the Great with masterpieces of burlesque by the great novelist Fielding, and in 1780, just fifty years after its first presentation in London, a comic opera of the same name, and based upon it, was given at Covent Garden. The songs and music from this will be incorporated in the production of 'Tom Thumb' at the Malvern Festival. On Friday we approach our grandparents' days with 'London Assurance.' Finally, to crown the whole series, comes the new play by Bernard Shaw."

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

have the honor to present

CYRIL HUME'S

MYSELF

AND THE YOUNG BOWMAN

The first book in three years from the author
of WIFE OF THE CENTAUR



Six stories, seventeen poems, an important contribution to American letters.
Limited to 1,500 copies, signed and type distributed. We advise early orders.
Two-fifty, all booksellers.

Coming April 21—RUDYARD KIPLING'S Limits and Renewals
—his first new book in six years

The New Books

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

Fiction

THIS CIRCLE OF FLESH. By LLOYD MORRIS. Harpers. 1932. \$2.50.

Very little can be said for this cinematic novel of New York life, except that it is dashing conceived and competently executed. This may seem a great deal, but it is less than nothing in the face of the claims made for it by its jacket.

Aimed straight at Hollywood, it will only be a short time before Constance Bennett is recreating the languid elegance of Cherry Driscoll, and Clark Gable the dashing Raeland Warren. Nor is this denigration, for we have here all the apparatus of the society movie—the luxurious apartments, the formal dinners, the Harlem parties, the city administration scandals, the charming adultery, the elegant depravity, the witty (sic) repartee, the discontented wife, and the brilliant, cynical, and wealthy novelist whose ideas, when set forth before us, seem so strangely banal.

This is Hollywood's meat—but with a difference; in the pages of the novel, Raeland Warren does not sleep with Cherry Driscoll. Hollywood will have to find a way.

GLORY. By NAN BAGBY STEPHENS. Day. 1932. \$2.50.

The tradition of the Southern romantic novel goes on in blackface in this first book, "Glory," by Nan Bagby Stephens, who sees the surface of the Negro shanty as clearly as Thomas Nelson Page saw the surface of the big house. But Mr. Page had a great advantage in the matter of time. Unfortunately Miss Stephens writes in a day when it is difficult to understand in either white belle or black the utter helplessness of the virgin in the old romantic story of virtue besieged.

Her story is the melodramatic tragedy of Southern Negro lovers whose love is broken by the lecherous power of a dominating Negro preacher. Under the cover of religion, he destroys the character of the boy and debauches the girl. She dies in her devoted older sister's arms of hunger and shame after flight in shame to Atlanta. The sister, who had loved the preacher, returns to denounce him in the church. Yet afterwards, when the preacher, penitent, throws himself at her feet, she would have saved him if she could from the truly Anglo-Saxon fury of the Negro mob.

In her descriptive passages and particularly in her description of the dramatic service at the church in which the preacher is denounced Miss Stephens shows real ability. Her chief fault lies in writing of Negroes in an attitude shaped by white condescension and white sentimentality. She endows her dark characters with Victorian morality, but she makes them take part in comedy, such as Negro misunderstanding of strange words, which is very close to the Amos and Andy variety. All in all, one is forced to dissent from the verdict of Dubose Heyward, himself the author of the finest book on the American Negro yet written, who gives the book the unqualified imprimatur of his appreciation.

FLESH IS HEIR. By LINCOLN KIRSTEIN. Brewer, Warren & Putnam. 1932. \$2.50.

Lincoln Kirstein's first novel should command attention on several scores: it is an entirely original piece of work, it is consistently graced by a fresh and interesting viewpoint, it is one more voice in the rapidly swelling chorus of new writers who have grown dissatisfied with the novel of disillusionment and bitterness. While it is more distinguished in its intentions than in its achievement, it will find its place as a milestone along the obviously changing path of American literary opinion.

In its barest essentials, the story is concerned with Roger Baum's attempts to orientate himself in a world he feels offers no ready-made balance to the individual. To demonstrate the steps in his hero's self-orientation, Mr. Kirstein has rather arbitrarily chosen situations which seem cut and dried in the extreme. Rather than allow them to represent the inevitable outgrowth of his hero's progression through his environment, he seems to have deliberately confronted Roger with them—fear, work, decadence, the disappearance of beauty, the power of a philosophy of action. Thus neither Roger nor

his associates achieve solid stature, but seem to present the cardboard dimensions of stylized figures. The author may well have deliberately sought this stylization (which seems the outcome of basing a novel on an idea rather than on a background of emotion), but if he has, he has done his very creditable talents a distinct disservice. For while he has definitely ruled out the realistic and naturalistic approaches, he has chosen an older and possibly more difficult vantage-ground—a background of romantic excitement. The characters which appear against such a scene require to be full-bodied and vital—not two-dimensional presentiments of a philosophic attitude.

PHILLIPINE. By MAURICE BEDEL. Translated by SAMUEL MIDDLEBROOK. Dutton. 1932. \$2.50.

M. Bedel, who will be remembered for his delightful, frothy, farcical romances, "Jerome, or The Latitude of Love" and "Molnoff, or the Count in the Kitchen" has written another book in the same vein, though not with quite the same skill. It is concerned with M. Grenadier, a *bourgeois gentilhomme* who, on retiring from business with a fortune, buys a magazine and fancies himself as a politico-literary figure. He cherishes the enormous admiration for Mussolini that one is apt to find in captains of industry who can so easily conceive themselves as god-like dictators; and he provides matter for the book by visiting Italy to report at first hand to his readers on the glories of authority. He takes with him his daughter Philippine, who has much the same devastating effect on the virtuous, philoprogenitive Fascist society as Zuleika Dobson on the celibate community of Oxford. M. Grenadier himself is at every turn insulted, fined, detained, and finally deported as an anti-Fascist suspect, on the most flimsy accidental grounds; but through it all he preserves his unshakable admiration for the uniforms and discipline of the police who are ill using him.

There is plenty of material here for one of the author's best extravaganzas; but not much is made of it. The book is fairly entertaining throughout, and has some excellent things in it, but on the whole it is far inferior to its author's earlier novels. The reason plainly is that M. Bedel is deeply opposed to Fascism; and a violent conviction of any kind is fatal to the soap-bubble world that he achieved in his other books, and seems to be trying for in this. The depth of his conviction robs him of the Gallic balance which was so noteworthy in "Molnoff," where the *nouveaux riches* and the decayed royalists were each made to set off the follies of the other group; and it makes the book a little too savage for fun. The *bourgeois gentilhomme* is a figure about whom we are more tender-hearted than our ancestors; we do not like to see him ridiculed for trying to make up for his disadvantages, no matter how mistakenly; and the sight of a respectable *rentier* undergoing insult and liking it is material for bitter satire, but not for the gay romance M. Bedel has tried to make of it. *On ne badine pas avec la haine, non plus qu'avec l'amour*; but that is what M. Bedel has tried to do.

THE HOUSE OF WIVES. By ELIZABETH HAMILTON HERBERT. Farrar & Rinehart. 1932. \$2.

Lightness and intelligence are seldom partners in the novel, even in satire, which is usually either smart-aleck or indignant. "The House of Wives" has both; and the swiftness and sanity they bring enables it at once to be gently sentimental and to avoid the sentimentality of falsification. Sometimes close to being a mere syllabub, it is never fatuous.

Dick Lambert is an idealized American business man: of good family, quietly well-bred, gentle, and tired-out, he has for years been meeting the numerous demands of a family that must do everything in the "right" way—country clubs, landscape gardens, governesses, and the proper prep schools for the children, a suitable number of cars. Animals and children love him, and the feeling is reciprocated. His wife, Claire, is one of those slick, lacquered women who know exactly what they want and how to get it. She runs his house with perfect smoothness, (Continued on page 626)

New and Worthwhile Scribner Books

Worshipful Society

The Country House : Fraternity : The Patrician

by
John Galsworthy

Three novels of pre-war English society, originally published when Galsworthy's audience, though highly appreciative, was a limited one. The 743-page volume is uniform in format with "A Modern Comedy" and "The Forsyte Saga." \$2.50

The House of Violence

by Felicia Gizycka

"Modern society portrayed in a novel," says The Chicago Tribune, "of vitality and a strange vividness of insight." \$2.50

Tobacco Road

by Erskine Caldwell

"Mr. Caldwell is dealing with important material. His novel fulfills the promise of his short stories." —New York Herald Tribune. \$2.50

The Young Die Good

by Nancy Hale

"This novel of the well-groomed younger set is a distinct addition to light reading." —Philadelphia Ledger. \$2.00

MOZART

by Marcia Davenport

"An eminently readable, unprejudiced, often fascinating description of Mozart, the man, which should lead to a better understanding and appreciation of Mozart, the musician." —Philip Hale in the Boston Herald. Illustrated. \$3.50

The Story of My Life

by Clarence Darrow

"Shows he is first and last a great human being—with the emphasis on the human." —John Erskine. Illustrated. \$3.50

The Quest of the Print

by Frank Weitenkampf

The Curator of Prints, New York Public Library, writes informatively and with charm on a subject of ever-widening interest. Illustrated. \$3.00

The Autobiography of Peggy Eaton

"An important contribution to American history, a long-delayed clarification of a disputed situation." —Philadelphia Ledger. \$2.50

Arabia Felix

Across the "Empty Quarter" of Arabia

by Bertram Thomas

"A feat of exploration unsurpassed in the history of man's conquest of the unknown parts of the earth." —Laurence McKinley Gould—Second-in-Command, Byrd Antarctic Expedition. With a foreword by T. E. Lawrence and 60 illustrations. \$5.00



at your bookstore

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, NEW YORK

A professor of biology shows us

The MACHINES WE ARE

By Robert T. Hance
University of Pittsburgh

How do we live and move and function and avoid disease? These and other pertinent topics about our bodies are answered in a series of non-technical talks marked by unexpected touches of humor.

\$3.00

from CROWELL'S List of Good Books

THOS. Y. CROWELL COMPANY, NEW YORK

COVICI · FRIEDE · Inc.

HAVE THE HONOR TO ANNOUNCE

In Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the death of
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

THE CENTENARY EDITION OF

FAUST

Translated from the German, with an Introduction and Notes

by GEORGE MADISON PRIEST, Ph. D.
Professor of Germanic Languages, Princeton University

Dr. Priest's work is the first contemporary English translation of both parts one and two. It follows the German original line by line, and preserves Goethe's rhyming schemes and meter. It retains the rich beauty of Goethe's style and renders the full meaning of his thought. \$5.00 Everywhere

There is also a limited edition of 75 copies, signed by the translator, printed on all-rag paper and specially bound, at \$15.00

Covici · Friede, Publishers

386 Fourth Avenue, New York City