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first book of essays in five years...

For certain Very Special People (we'd wager them to be among the most charming of your friends) our one-word guide to good giving is simply "MORLEY." Luckily this year there's just published a new volume of vivid and intuitive sketches, which draws a memorable profile of America in a time of extraordinary interest—the zig-zag years 1928-1933. This rich book contains as an added feature a scrapbook "of a few souvenirs or unearned increments which the Author has an impulse to share with the reader"—14 pages of delightful and curious tokens out of memory which would really make a lovely little volume in themselves.

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DOUBLEDAY, DORAN

The PHOENIX NEST

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

RILKE'S LETTER TO A POET

I WISH all young poets would read the following letter, the translation of which has been made by a young undergraduate up at Bennington College in Vermont. Her name is Yvette Hardman. Rainer Maria Rilke, as you probably know, was a German author born at Prague, who died in 1926 at the age of fifty-one. In the first ten years of the twentieth century he held the position, with Stefan George, of being Germany's foremost lyric poet. He wrote prose also, but is better known as a poet.

Paris, Feb. 17th, 1903.

My dear Sir:

Your letter reached me only a few days ago. I want to thank you for its great and kind confidence. I can hardly do more. I cannot go into the style of your poetry; because any critical purpose is too far from me. Nothing can touch a work of art so little as critical words; they always turn into more or less lucky misunderstandings. Things cannot all be grasped and expressed as completely as people would usually have us believe; most events are inexplicable; they happen in a space into which no word can penetrate; and most inexplicable of all are works of art, mysterious existences, whose life continues as ours passes away.

In addition to this preface, I want only to say to you that your verse has no individual style, only silent and covered gropings toward the personal. I feel this most in the last poem, "My Soul." There something of your own wants to come out into words. And in the beautiful poem "To Leopardi" there is growing perhaps a kind of kinship with that great, lonely man. In spite of this the poems are not yet anything of yourself, anything original, not even the last one and the one to Leopardi. Your kind letter which accompanied them did not fail to make clear to me many defects which I had felt in reading the poetry, without having been able actually to name them.

You ask whether your poems are good. You ask me. You have asked others before. You send them to magazines, and you let it worry you when certain editors refuse your efforts. Now (since you have permitted me to counsel you), I beg you to give up all that. You look to the outside, and that before all you must not do now. Nobody can help you, nobody. There is only one, single way. Go into yourself. Investigate the reason for which you write; find out whether it is rooted in the deepest part of your heart; confess to yourself that you would have to die if it were denied you to write. This before all: ask yourself in the stillest hour of your night: must I write? Delve into yourself for a deep answer. And if it should sound in agreement, if you have to meet this question with a strong and simple "I must," then model your life after this need; your life, even your most indifferent and slightest hours, must become a sign of this impulse and a testimony to it. Then, draw close to nature. Then try, as a first human being, to express what you see and experience and love and lose. Do not write love poems; avoid above all those patterns which are too easy and common; these are the most difficult, because a great, ripened art is needed to give freshness, where traditions which are good and to the point are suggested in quantity. Therefore save yourself from the usual motifs and use those which offer themselves in your own everyday life; describe your sorrows and desires, your passing thoughts, your belief in whatever beauty—describe all those with inner, quiet, humble sincerity, and use for your expression the things in your surroundings, the pictures from your dreams and the objects of your memories. Do not accuse your everyday existence of poverty; accuse yourself rather of not being poet enough to see your riches; because for the creator there is no poverty and no poor, indifferent place. Even if you were in a prison whose walls let none of the bustle of the world come to your senses—would you not still have your childhood, that costly, kingly abundance, that treasure-house of memory? Turn your attention there. Try to lift the sunken sensations of that far past; your personality will strengthen itself, your loneliness will grow and become a dusky dwelling which

the tumult of others will pass at a great distance.—And if from this turning within, out of this sinking into your own world, verses come, then it will not occur to you to ask others whether it is good poetry. You will not try to interest publications in your work; for you will see in it your beloved, natural possession, a part and a voice of your life. Art is good when it springs from necessity. In this kind of origin is its judgment; there is no other. Therefore, my dear Sir, I could know no advice for you but this: to go into yourself and try the depths from which your life arises; in this fountain you will find the answer to the question whether you must create. Accept it as it sounds, without alteration. Then take the fate upon yourself and carry it, its burden and its greatness, without asking the wage that can come from the outside. Because the creator must be a world for himself, and find everything in himself and in nature, to which he is allied.

Perhaps, however, after this descent into yourself and your loneliness, you must renounce being a poet (it is sufficient, as I have said, to feel that one can live without writing, to be prohibited from doing it at all). But even in that case this visit which I ask you to make will not have been in vain. Your life will at all events find its own way from there, and that it may be good, rich, and wide I wish you more than I can say.

What else shall I say to you? Everything seems to me to be emphasized according to its right; and finally, I want only to advise you to keep growing quietly and seriously; you can hardly disturb your development more than by looking outward and waiting for answers from outside to questions which can be answered only by your innermost feelings in your gentlest hours.

It was a great pleasure to me to find in your letter the name of Professor Horacek; I retain for that admirable scholar a great veneration and a thankfulness which has lasted through the years. Will you please say to him of my feeling: it is very kind that he still thinks of me, and I know how to appreciate it.

The poems with which you trusted me I am returning to you immediately. And I thank you again for the greatness and heartiness of your confidence, of which I have tried to make myself, through this frank and well-intentioned answer, as worthy as it is possible for a stranger to be.

With all devotion and interest,
RAINER MARIA RILKE.

ONCE MORE, YE LAURELS!

I thank Malcolm Johnson of Doubleday, Doran, for sending me the following information, re my recent discussion of Banville and Housman:

Isn't the explanation of A. E. Housman's use of Banville's lines "Les lauriers sont coupés . . ." simply that both authors borrowed them from an old French song? A little book called "A Propos de Chansons" quotes them and goes on to add fragments,

. . . les lauriers du bois
Les laisserons-nous faner?

Non, chacun a son tour
Ira les ramasser.

Car les lauriers du bois sont déjà repoussés.

The whole point, anyway, ought to be that Housman has achieved the impossible task of translating a line of verse with its magic quite intact. Someone should induce him to try his hand at Villon, and put "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?" into English worthy of the French.

COSTUME BALL AND CHAP-BOOK

The Artists and Writers Dinner Club is issuing its first annual Chap-Book conjointly with its Costume Ball and Carnival to be held at Webster Hall, Friday evening, Dec. 15th, for the benefit of needy artists and writers. Contributions received by J. George Frederick, Editor of the Chap-Book, include short stories, articles, and poems by Theodore Dreiser, Louis Bromfield, Faith Baldwin, Max Eastman, Struthers Burt, William McFee, Whit Burnett, Arthur Guiterman, Thyra Samter Winslow, and others.

For your Convenience..

we've prepared this very careful checklist of our books as Gift Suggestions...

☆ For Almost Anyone

Now if you want to please someone particularly—lady or gentleman—by all means get the book which the N. Y. Times recommends to you as the book of the year for a gift: **MARY OF NAZARETH**, by **Mary Borden**. Here's the curiously untold story of history's most haunting woman figure; a real literary masterpiece which, quite aside from its fine spiritual appeal, is the moving, human story of a Mother. Women will like it for its poignant drama, men for the incomparable march of colorful Palestine under the Romans. \$2.50

☆ For a Man

Then, if you want to make a hit with a gentleman who is interested in the history of his country, we'd suggest first of all **RABBLE IN ARMS**, by **Kenneth Roberts**. This is the smashing "prose John Brown's Body" which is re-writing American history of the Revolution. Critics, booksellers, historians, other novelists, and hundreds of happy readers are excited about it, not only as scrupulous history, but as fascinating reading. The latest addition to the ranks of the year's big fiction Best Sellers, \$2.50. If he hasn't read **ARUNDEL** and **THE LIVELY LADY**, by the same author, he should have them too. \$2.50 each

Sinclair Lewis, by the way, is one of those who've just gone back to read **JOHN BROWN'S BODY**, by **Stephen Vincent Benét**, since it was awarded this year's Roosevelt Medal, and you'd have to go a long way to find a present for a man that will more constantly grow in pleasure through the years. \$2.50

Now if he's already read **ANTHONY ADVERSE**, or doesn't care to tackle that book, but likes long romantic novels, give him **Helen Simpson's THE WOMAN ON THE BEAST**. This is a choice of the English book-of-the-month club which starts in the devil-haunted Indo-China of 1579 and spins out to an end in a Brave New World of Australia, 1999. Rich imagination and color in pages that make up a wealth of fantastic adventure. A book that's likely to have been overlooked, but which will delight anyone you're thoughtful enough to give it to. \$2.50

We'll just list here a few more books to please a man, of which you've undoubtedly already heard from the critics, and from their success in the bookshops:

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Gilbert W. Gabriel's GREAT FORTUNE \$2.50

☆ For a Woman

We can't think of a more entertaining gift for a lady than **William McFee's NO CASTLE IN SPAIN**, the perfectly delightful love story of a New York girl in South America—her mediaeval husband, and her modern lover. For really classic prose you have to go to McFee, but this is also a modern romance that is champagne for wit and fun and breathless adventure. \$2.50

If she's an unconscious actress (We don't want these lists to be Exclusive!), by all odds the best book for her this year is **Booth Tarkington's** great novel of the magic world backstage, **PRESENTING LILY MARS**, which presents a girl as lovely and as glamorously alive as Katharine Hepburn in her

latest picture. Mr. Tarkington, twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize, has just been awarded the gold medal of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. \$2.50

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☆ For Very Special Tastes

Someone's good news this Christmas morning is going to be that archy the cockroach has written a perfectly capital new book of poems in lower

case like this **archys life of mehitabel** which is just about the year's best biography being further adventures of mehitabel the incorrigible cat toujours gai especially in hollywood. A **Don Marquis** classic of humor, alone in its class. \$2.00

Virginia Kirkus, who writes such delightful book reviews for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, has just dropped us a personal note to say that she's completely lost her heart to **Beverley Nichols' A THATCHED ROOF**. "It's the legitimate sequel to **DOWN THE GARDEN PATH**", she writes, "and if you haven't read that, get the two books together and retire to a quiet corner where you won't be tempted to spoil them for your friends by reading extracts aloud." The nice thing about **A THATCHED ROOF** is that it's just published this Wednesday so that few are likely to have bought it for themselves. \$2.50—or in a holiday box with **DOWN THE GARDEN PATH**, \$5.00

If you know someone to whom the story's the thing, the **O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD PRIZE STORIES OF 1933**, edited by **Harry Hansen**, will be a treat in the cream of short fiction from favorite authors and from some most interesting new discoveries. \$2.50

Of course, all booklovers and collectors will want **Christopher Morley's** first essay **INTERNAL REVENUE**.

☆ For the Children

The maximum of entertainment for young people, aged anything from eight upwards, we would say, is **ENGINES AND BRASS BANDS**, by **Olive Beaupré Miller**, the famous originator of *My Book House*. It's a colorful story of a whole Midwest town in the Nineties. A book to revive the art of reading aloud, and therefore one which you may give, with perfect impunity, to a whole family. \$2.50 with 90 lovely illustrations.

And here are some other books from which you'll be able to make interesting choices for the children. They all have pictures of course, lots of them done in gorgeous color. . .

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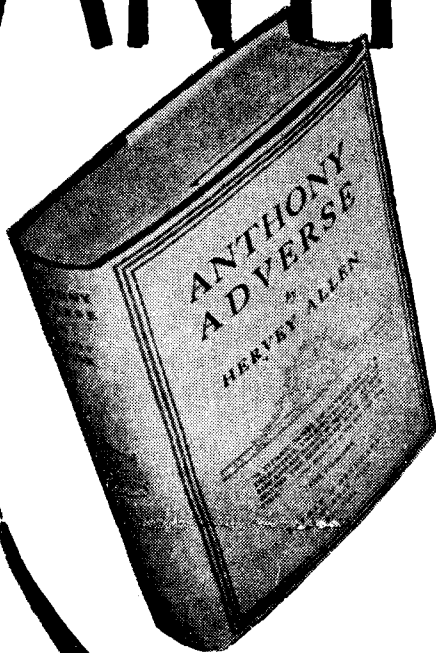
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Hilaire Belloc's Life of Charles I

CHARLES I KING OF ENGLAND. By Hilaire Belloc. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1933. \$4.

Reviewed by DAVID HARRIS WILLSON

FEW monarchs have been more ardently debated by posterity than has Charles I. This is partly because many of the issues during his reign long remained cardinal questions in English politics; but it is due also to a divergence of opinion concerning Charles himself. To certain persons he appears as a noble and graceful exponent of his kingly office, religious, virtuous, brave, an attractively melancholy and tragic figure, martyred by repulsive fanatics. Others, however, are repelled by his inability to see any point of view except his own, his unstatesmanlike weakness and vacillation, his frequent breaking of his plighted word, and his dulness in gauging the world in which he lived until inexorable events came crowding upon his poor, bewildered intellect and whirled him to his doom.

In Mr. Belloc Charles has found a spirited (almost passionate) advocate who declares that "no wise man has given Charles Stuart as yet his due praise" and who is out to smite the king's enemies hip and thigh. The author finds that for his purpose the traditional procedure of the historian is too confining and he comments on "the danger of the scientific and documentary method." This danger has most certainly been avoided. But Mr. Belloc has not escaped the pitfall of approaching his subject with preconceived ideas. The most important of these ideas is that the country gentlemen of England, gorged with the spoils of the Catholic church in the sixteenth century, were determined, in the seventeenth, to consolidate their gains by overthrowing the monarchy and assuming for their own class the powers formerly held by the crown. They were for the most part "indifferent to theology" and allied themselves with puritanism merely as a matter of politics. Their leaders were villains to a man and Mr. Belloc descends upon them with a war-whoop of denunciation. Sir John Eliot is portrayed as a thief and the betrayer—even the murderer—of Buckingham since his eloquent attacks produced the frame of mind that led to Buckingham's assassination. Pym is a loose liver and treacherous intriguer. But Cromwell is the black arch fiend who darkly plots against the life of royalty.

Against this background of sordid sedition Charles appears first as a child severely handicapped by ill health and only slowly developing in mind and body, then as a young man whose whole life centered about his affection for Buckingham, and finally, after the maturing effect of Buckingham's death, as a king determined to be a king indeed and to rule his country as a master having all the reins of government, ecclesiastical and temporal, concentrated in his own hands. The author believes he might have succeeded had not events forced the calling of the Long Parliament, after which Charles, betrayed and deceived on every hand and matched with wily and unscrupulous opponents, is lured from one error to another until the fatal scene at Whitehall.

Mr. Belloc's polemic method does not take us far below the surface. The gentry's fear for their estates is but one in a host of causes that estranged them from the crown. The strength of puritanism, for example, might well have been weighed rather than denounced. And the picture of Charles's attempt at personal rule ignores his utter incapacity in business. The book contains many other judgments that will hardly bear examination. Mary Queen of Scots is categorically declared to be innocent of her husband's murder. Elizabeth is a "warped, frustrated woman, sensitive to the accusation of bastardy," completely dominated by the Cecils and mulcted of her revenues by rapacious courtiers. Sir Robert Cecil is possibly the originator of the Gunpowder Plot and Pym a possible giver of bribes; the matchless Verney a trimmer,

Cromwell a brutal bully. Buckingham, on the other hand, is greatly extolled. His "strict economy" "brought order into the financial affairs of the country." More surprising still, he was the originator of the English navy who first envisaged England's future greatness at sea, a conception "delayed and warped" during the reign of Elizabeth. Yet Charles was all but penniless until Buckingham's death and, in contrast to Elizabeth's victory over the Spanish Armada, Buckingham sent out the expedition against Cadiz, commonly considered the lowest point of disastrous degeneration in the naval annals of Britain. Mr. Belloc would answer that the fault lay in the Commons for refusing supply. But it might be argued that when statesmen grasp vainly and recklessly at the unattainable they lay themselves open to ridicule. These personal judgments of the author (overshadowing numerous errors of fact) force the critic to the conviction that he is not reading history but rather Mr. Belloc's ideas about history.

Nevertheless the book will be widely read. As a literary composition it is admirable, written with finish and artistry, forceful, vivid, and incisive. Mr. Belloc believes what he writes and drives his points home with telling blows.

Delicate Erudition

WHISTLES OF SILVER. By Helen Parry Eden. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by ALINE KILMER

FOR those whose taste demands something delicate and lots of it, "Whistles of Silver" will provide a feast. A feast, too, served up in admirable style, with side-dishes elegant and appetizing.

To drop rather hastily a figure that might soon become embarrassing, cats here consort with saints, puritans with pastry cooks, and medieval legends with modern life. An intense, wide-flowing Chaucerian Catholicity marks every tale, and binds into an harmonious whole what might otherwise seem a bit miscellaneous. Almost every story is preceded by a poem, miraculously close to it in theme or mood—a poem of charm, of exquisite craftsmanship, with sometimes the thrill of a trumpet-peal. Take:

*There blew a horn in Bethlehem,
Christ sat on Mary's knee,
"And O," she said, "my Child," she said,
"They blow that horn for Thee.
For Thou shalt hunt the heart of man,
Thy prey, from hole to hole—
Till at the last Thy little hands
Shall close upon his soul."*

Saint Anonyme in Calvados and Borgo Sant' Ignazio in Vicenza are Mrs. Eden's favorite towns. If it were but possible to visit them! And, also, to read in the "Biblioteca Ignotiana" the ancient manuscripts from which she gathers her enchanting stories—with now and then a dutiful reference to "my pious original." And, speaking of books, what collector would not seize with joy upon those three scholarly treatments of a much neglected subject: "Ralph Fritter's daring monograph on 'The Linklater Collection of English Door-Scrapers' (six plates in colotype and one hundred illustrations in text)," "Pfitzer's 'Englische Fuss-Abstreicher' (Berlin, 1901), and Herve's 'Decrotoirs Classique de Grande Bretagne' (Paris, 1902)?"

To set against this delicate and smiling erudition are homely tales like the poignant story of Emily Bing, landlady of Pusey Terrace, and the marmalade cat. Cats, by the way, abound throughout the book. There's no use in comparing Mrs. Eden's cat fancying with that of Agnes Repplier; the studies of the two are amusingly different. Mrs. Eden's knowledge of the tribe, fireside companion and "cattus agrestis," is so intimate that you wonder a little how she came by it all.

Illustrations in black and white by Denis Eden manage almost to surpass the text in humor and beauty.

Aline Kilmer, like Mrs. Eden a Catholic, is the author of several volumes of poems, essays, and fiction.

Junkers in the Jungle

AFRICAN INTRIGUE. By Alfred Batson. Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co. 1933. \$2.75.

Reviewed by HAMILTON J. SMITH

"AFRICAN INTRIGUE" is a cleverly chosen title, since by not revealing whether it covers fact or fiction it commands (and fairly) a double audience. The book is in reality the actual record of an African adventure retold by Alfred Batson, a journalist and able story-teller, who dramatizes the narrative and characters. It can with equal fairness be judged as both novel and history; on both counts it comes out on top.

The days of 1911 were days of international jealousies and greed for territorial expansion. An expedition was sent by Germany into wildest Africa under the guise of hunting big game, so that the real object might be kept secret from France and England. Of course, this was to study the value of terrain from the standpoints of military, economic, and agricultural usefulness—to determine Germany's aggression. The exploring party consisted of four white men: an army officer, a famous botanist, a distinguished geologist, and the "master of porters." Ninety blacks started with them as porters and laborers, but they were all driven to desert before the time of greatest need, by the brutality of the leader, Major von Harden. Only the "master of porters" returned alive to tell the tale.

The dramatic situation of the story lies in the conflict between the domineering arrogance of the Prussian military caste, typified by Herr Major von Harden, and the stubborn cruelty and relentless forces of the jungle. In the depths of wildest Africa the Junker was a strange and incongruous figure. With tight-fitting, white uniform, filthy and rotted by the blistering sun, tight collar pinching his raw neck, tapping his swagger boots with a riding crop and continually polishing the monocle which glistened in his right eye, he plunged ahead, leading his comrades into unnecessary danger and hardship. His pride of military caste even there held him aloof from his associates whom, though distinguished scientists, he considered beneath him as civilians. He forced them to hate and admire him, by example making them sure of his bravery and leadership. Bitten to distraction by insects, scorched with fever, parched with thirst and in agonizing pain, he would not condescend to ask help from his inferiors.

Each of the four characters is vividly drawn. Herr Doctor Muller, the botanist, a college professor of south German temperament, kindly, fat and sentimental, unfitted by nature to suffer the fierce cruelty of the tropics, with synthetic courage remained loyal to his trust and finished his report before the jungle got him. Herr Doktor von Rodenbach, a tall, gaunt, taciturn man, with a sense of humor, tolerantly indifferent to all about him, a practical scientist, accepted conditions as they existed even in facing death. The Master of the Porters had fled from Germany years ago to escape the Junkers and Kultur and sought greater freedom in Africa. In spite of his hatred for von Harden and his mission, he, like his comrades, was faithful to both.

These characterizations are the work of a novelist. Even the childlike savages are vividly alive and real. They love their "Little White Master," "the hippopotamus man" and "the giraffe man"—but "the hyena man" they fear and hate. It would be unfair to the reader to tell the plot (the narrative does advance to a climax) or to reveal how the mission ended. He will be repaid by reading these things for himself.

From the point of view of story alone the book is absorbing, but it has more important qualities than those of a good yarn. Especially at this time it is more significant as a "non-fiction." Things that have happened before may happen again, and fundamental character has a way of reasserting itself.

Hamilton J. Smith was attached to the Department Intelligence Office, Eastern Department, Governor's Island, throughout the war.