

A London Letter

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

UNDER the probable title of "A Communication to My Friends," Mr. George Moore is now engaged in writing a short account of his literary life. Curiously few great writers have cared to share with their readers the secrets connected with the creative side of their work. So I feel the fact that George Moore is so engaged is important news to every man and woman in the English-speaking world who takes a real interest in literature. Nowadays, when the widest license is accorded to every writer, whatever his kind of writing and however small the value of his work, it is difficult to realize how great a fight was put up by George Moore, not once but several times, against those powerful fanatics who would fain have kept literature in swaddling-bands. It seems incredible that not very long ago "Esther Waters," that truly noble presentment of a human being, was banned both by the circulating libraries and the public libraries of Great Britain. Twice at least Mr. Moore has had to appear in a London police court to defend his honor as a writer. Small wonder that one of his witty friends suggested that his new apologia should be called "George and the Dragon"! It is also good news that as soon as Mr. Moore has finished his apologia, he will again resume work on a short novel.

The enforced withdrawal by the British government of Compton Mackenzie's "Greek Memories" has made a considerable sensation. As seems to be always the case when a book is suppressed in England, "Greek Memories" had already been exhaustively reviewed, in two or three cases by men who were actually in Greece at the time the events occurred which Compton Mackenzie describes in his book. Furthermore, everyone really concerned with the contents of the book had already made a point of procuring it. No reason was given for the suppression of what must be, to all those interested in the part played by Greece in the war, a book of pronounced value.

If, as is rumored, the suppression of the volume is owing to a short passage which gave away what might well be called "le secret de Polichinell," then it is to be hoped that "Greek Memories" will be in due course republished, minus the offending paragraph. What the London *Times* wrote of "First Athenian Memories" is certainly true of this remarkable book: "The writer can use his pen at will as a razor, a rapier, a cutlass, or a club; he can tickle with it as with a feather, or make it sting like caustic."

In Victorian days, men, and women, too, wrote down their frank opinions of those about them, and then, putting the manuscript away, either left it to the discretion of their executors whether their memoirs should be published at all, or (as in the case of Sir Edmund Gosse with his *Diary*), directed that publication be postponed for fifty years. Official biographies are still extremely discreet—the life of Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford, is a case in point. But unofficial lives, and, above all, recollections connected with the great war, have been extraordinarily frank.

"Greek Memories" was followed by Bruce Lockhart's "British Agent." As the book has been, I understand, chosen by the American Book-of-the-Month Club, thousands of readers on your side will soon be reading this extraordinary record. I may claim to have read almost every book on Russia published in the French and English languages, also every translation from the German I have been able to procure. But no book dealing with pre-war or post-war Russia has made on me so vivid an impression as has this account of part of an amazingly varied and adventurous life. Blurbs seldom tell the truth. But the blurb issued with the English edition of this book tells naught but the simple truth: "Had there been an Englishman in daily contact with Robespierre and Danton during the great Revolution, his record would have had a place in every library today. Bruce Lockhart's record of his relationship with Lenin and Trotsky provides a parallel contribution to the history of our own time." "British Agent" will be followed by a volume dealing with the author's life in the years that immediately followed 1918. They were spent by him in the Near East, and were filled with even more strange and exciting adventures than those he has described in this volume. The career of this writer proves once more, if indeed proof was needed,

that journalism formed an excellent apprenticeship for the writing of literature. From Defoe onwards, the gift of vivid narrative seems in a special degree to be bestowed on those who have been compelled to write against time. The author of "British Agent" is now what I suppose would be called in America the most successful columnist on the London Press.

A new book which, though quite different from that of Mr. Lockhart, is full of extremely interesting, hitherto unpublished, information concerning the part played by the British Military Mission sent to Berlin immediately after the war, is "Peace Patrol," by Colonel Stewart Roddie. Of the hundreds of volumes written concerning post-war conditions in Germany, there is none which covers the particular field selected by this able British officer. He came in touch with all the great figures of the present German day, from Hindenburg down to Hitler. It may also be revealed, I hope without fear of indiscretion, that Colonel Roddie was entrusted with the delicate task of bringing together the broken links which naturally united many of the members of the British Royal Family to innumerable relations—uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces—who, till the August of 1914, had been on terms of the closest intimacy and affection. Of these German ex-kings and queens, grand-dukes and grand-duchesses, Colonel Roddie gives a very living, intimate, and often amusing and pathetic picture.

Mr. Douglas Jerrold, bearer of a name famous in Victorian annals, and whose novel, "Storm over Europe," created a good deal of notice when it came out two or three years ago, is now engaged in an exhaustive study of Charles the First. Considering the pivotal part played in British history by that unfortunate monarch, it is strange that nothing has been written about him in our own time. Mr. Jerrold intends his book to be an answer to the Whig historians, Macaulay and Trevelyan, to say nothing of Gardiner. He is finding a great deal of new, unpublished, it may be said unsuspected, material, which will throw light on the character, and also on the policy, of the man who is evidently fast becoming his hero, as well as his subject. Charles the First and his enigmatic personality has so far attracted but few novelists, yet, in the present writer's view, one of the most striking passages in the literature of the nineteenth century is the page in "John Inglesant" where Strafford's ghost gives the password, *Christ*, in the Palace of Whitehall, when on his way to confront his faithless king.

Mr. Guedalla, who will soon be in America, has been absorbed for some time past going through, with a view to editing, the immense correspondence, comprising thousands of letters, written by Queen Victoria to Gladstone, and by Gladstone to Queen Victoria. Gladstone's children, of whom there is now only one survivor, felt most deeply the widespread impression which prevails, it may be admitted, wherever the modern history of England is read, that the Queen hated and it might almost be said despised, the man who was for so long her faithful and deferential servant. Mr. Guedalla will be able to prove that for more than half their life-long connection, the Queen was not only fond of Gladstone, but trusted him implicitly. That her affection turned to acute dislike cannot be denied. The Gladstone family believe that this was owing to the crafty machinations of Disraeli; but the admirers of "Dizzy" declare that it was Gladstone's own conduct, especially his attitude towards Ireland, that altered her feeling. Still, whatever she may have felt, he seems to have gone on to the end regarding her with a curious mixture of affection and reverence, accepting her, in very truth, as "the Lord's anointed." It is a curious fact, one, I fancy, known to comparatively few people, that since Spain became a republic, the British sovereign is the only monarch in the world who is actually anointed, the ceremonial dating from almost the Norman Conquest.

Apropos of royal personages and their letters, an effort is again being made to obtain the publication rights of the extraordinarily interesting, and naturally most intimate, letters which were written by the late Empress Frederick to her brother, the then Prince of Wales, later Edward the Seventh. There were only eleven months between the brother and sister, and they remained bound in the

tenderest affection, a touching fact when it be remembered that the sister married and left her country when she was only seventeen, and that their opportunities of meeting must have been comparatively few.

The present writer was once told, apropos of Queen Victoria's daily letter to each of her children, a story which appears to her amusing. The Queen's letter to the then German Crown Princess was always entrusted to a member of the corps of Queen's Messengers. In those days these gentlemen played a considerable part in diplomacy, for they were the bearers of the Foreign Office bags, whose contents were regarded as so private that if the ship on which the messenger happened to be was in danger of sinking, the bags had to be immediately weighted and thrown overboard. Now Queen Victoria's daily letter to her daughter caused Bismarck great uneasiness. He believed each letter contained not only advice, but practically orders affecting the relations of the two countries. My informant had the task of examining this correspondence when it was sent back to Windsor after the Empress Frederick's death. The immense majority of the letters—in fact, far more than the proverbial ninety-nine out of each hundred—consisted of the words: "My dear Vicky. I hope you are well. I am well. Love from Ma."

Three or four years ago there appeared a striking novel called "Cranmer Paul," by Rolf Bennett, which was regarded by the discerning as heralding the advent of a fine new novelist. Indeed the story was compared by some of the leading English critics to the work of Conrad. The same writer is now publishing in February a new novel called "Mr. Pyecroft Goes to Heaven." I understand that this is a study of escape—of a man, that is, who, chained to dull routine all his life, at last gets away from it all, without, however, knowing that he is doing so. Believing himself to be the descendant of a famous pirate, and then eventually the actual pirate himself, "Mr. Pyecroft," organizes an expedition to the West Indies in order to recover a vast treasure. He is regarded by those about him as more or less insane; yet his supporters so far believe in the treasure as to push forward with their venture. The book is written on a large scale, as will be seen by the fact that certain unforeseen complications in this curious, original story almost lead to a war between England and America!

The New Books Fiction

(Continued from preceding page)

in turn, each phase of a hilarious merry-go-round life of pleasure-seeking is stressed in rapid, extravagant episodes. The whole is decked out in amusing language with a light journalistic touch and an undercurrent of humorous ridicule. Upon an ocean liner, in studios and night-clubs, in Detroit gangdom and in New York social fastnesses (?), the author's imagination runs on, an endless stream of farcical invention, sustained to the end. Approached in its own vein the book will be sardonically amusing.

Miscellaneous

PERSONALITY, MANY IN ONE. By JAMES WINFRED BRIDGES. Stratford. 1932.

Professor Bridges supplies a useful map to guide students and studious readers in a territory in which no one is a stranger but few are expert. For, however we conceive the nature of the "many in one" of which the individual is the summary and issue, we need triangulations and surveys to spy out the land of personality. From the physical features to the physiological dynamisms, to the intellectual capacities, the affective qualities, the temperamental constitution, the type allegiances, the course runs convergently to some form of total synthesis. Each personality is a consistent and congenial one in many.

By limiting his purpose and proceeding in orderly and simple fashion, the author presents a primer of orientation, which will be as servicable to those professionally as to those personally concerned in a clarity of approach. We all have the problem, as James observed, of reaching a *modus vivendi* among the several personalities, established and potential, that must keep house together in the same tenement of clay. That task presents all manners of complexities because the clay is neuron tissue and not altogether plastic. Its functioning is a compromise between heredity and environment, between purpose and circumstance, between ambition and social adjustment.

-of lasting value-

Flowering Wilderness

by John Galsworthy

\$2.50

Our Times: 1909-1914

by Mark Sullivan

\$3.75.

The March of Democracy

The Rise of the Union

James Truslow Adams

\$3.50

Death in the Afternoon

by Ernest Hemingway

\$3.50

SCRIBNE

A good New Year's Resolution...

I'm going to read **HUMAN BEING** by Christopher Morley because the critics and individual readers are saying that:

—it brings to life two memorable characters; Richard Roe, the Mouse-Heart, and Minnie Hutzler, one of those rare and thrilling people who seem to know What It's All About.

—it contains perhaps the finest picture ever drawn in fiction of the drama that goes on behind the plate glass doors of an office.

—it is as richly quotable as any book published in years.

—it draws the web of life very tight, probes many of the cruel and subtle secrets of all our lives.

—it enables the reader to share the creation of the actual human pang.

—it is a nobly human novel—it is Christopher Morley at his greatest—it is as haunting as his "Thunder on the Left."

HUMAN BEING

by Christopher Morley

350 Pages. Fifth Large Printing. \$2.50. Doubleday, Doran

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 cannot be answered in print, a stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed for reply.

B. DeV., Lincoln, Mass., has in mind "something which we will agree to call a farm; not a permanent abode but a place for week-ends and similar retreats from the literary-minded," which will use so much of his reserves that he can't afford to have the place put in order by a professional.

THAT will leave the labor of restoring house, barn, and surroundings to me," he says, "a person of moderate charm and great enthusiasm but cosmically ignorant of tools, the technique of their use, and the devices of common sense. I am an authority on frontier life but something less than a frontiersman. I am not, God help me, a handy man. I cannot convey to you how complete a dub I am at anything which requires tool sense.

"But I have a scholar's faith in books . . . and Boston bookstores are impressive but barren of the practical. Are there no books for dubs of my sort? Something to be called perhaps 'Theory and Practice of the Saw and Plane for Beginners'? Is there not a 'Householder's Book of Knowledge' with appendices on amateur wiring, hydraulics of the farm house, how to affix weather-stripping, and the properties of solder? Is it beyond the resources of printing to qualify a writer to mend holes in plaster?"

Right away I think of three. The latest is "The Handy Man's Handy Book," by Clemens T. Schaefer (Harper), which goes into general mechanical operations, wood, metal, electrical and plumbing work; tells about tools and their use and how not to use them. It is the sort of book meant to train up handy men at home, in the factory and—take notice—on the farm. I know something about farms. My uncle says that to keep a small one-man farm on its feet in Vermont calls for expert knowledge of at least ten trades, not to speak of household and veterinary medicine, and what you know you usually need in a hurry.

So perhaps B. DeV. can stand one or two more books? "Tinkering With Tools," by H. H. Saylor (Little, Brown), is a grand one to have around the house.

It even gives me delusions that I could do something with hammer and nails. Observe that it is published by a Boston house. This deals also with floor-finishing, painting, plumbing, electric wiring, masonry and brickwork: I have recommended it ever since a tinkering boy of my acquaintance worked his way triumphantly through the better part of it. And when you get to the furniture-making, there is "Carpentry for Beginners: Things to Make," by J. D. Adams (Dodd, Mead), and that shows you how to construct all sorts of things.

ROBERT HART LEWIS of the *Oxford University Press* thinks that J. L. (no address) who asked about a slang dictionary,

"will be greatly interested in the new edition edited by Eric Partridge of Francis Grose: 'Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue,' issued by Scholartis Press, for which we are agents: the price is \$8 of his bookseller. Your colleague Quercus mentioned this in his article in the *Saturday Review of Literature* of July 9."

"We want," says M. K., Evanston, Ill., "a book describing two-handed card games. Russian Bank is the best yet and does good service but we need variety." There is a book, published in 1931, for precisely this purpose: "Games For Two," by E. S. Warren (Harcourt). And in case something about Russian Bank is required by anyone reading this, there is "Russian Bank (or Crapette)," by R. F. Foster (Dutton).

H. G., Green Bay, Wis., asks for a book for a boy who shows an interest in the legal profession. "The Road to the Law," by Dudley Cammett Lunt (Whittlesey House) uses layman's language to explain the elements of common law, illustrating from real life with much humor and charm. The pictures are reproductions in aquatint of Pugin and Rowlandson prints.

E. B. Z., Verona, N. J., asks for the best edition of "Le Cid" for children 13-15. "I am most anxious for my children to know and enjoy it but do not want it spoiled for them by the wrong presentation." The most distinguished version of the story of the Cid is that made by Merriam Sherwood for Longmans, Green, in "The Tale of the Warrior Lord": this is translated for the first time into English from the definitive edition of the poem, by Ramon Menendez Pidal. It is not often that so sound a work of scholarship is conducted in the interests of children; this version is not only excitingly readable, but further spiced by excellent pictures.

IN the November 26th issue of the *Saturday Review*, says H. S. D., Hanford, California, your department asks for the name of a book in which all the characters are trees. In Walter De La Mare's fascinating "Desert Island" (Farrar & Rinehart) is a not (page 174) in which he says:

"The pines are not trees, but humans—"

Not so the beings whom Baron Holberg's hero, Niels Klim, encounters in his "Journey to the World Underground." This famous Danish author, who died at the age of seventy in 1754, is renowned not only for his comedies but as a historian and a philosopher. . . . The "Journey" was written in Latin; it is at once a satire and a complete system of ethics.

Its hero, armed only with a boathook, descends into the netherworld by way of an orifice in the "Weathercock Mountain." The rope by which he is suspended snaps, and, like Milton's archangel, he falls—and falls. He finds himself at last in a region

(Continued on page 372)

The Compleat Collector

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Conducted by

CARL PURINGTON ROLLINS & JOHN T. WINTERICH

Praise of Folly

ERASMI ROTERODAMI: ECONOMIUM MORIÆ i. e. Stultitiæ Laus. (Erasmus's Praise of Folly.) Printed at Basle in 1515, and decorated with the original drawings of Hans Holbein the Younger. Facsimile reproduction. Basle: H. Oppermann. 1931. 160 mks.

LATE in the summer of 1509, Desiderius Erasmus, scholar, reformer, priest, went to England on his third visit. At the house of Sir Thomas Moore, while he waited for the tardy arrival of his books, he wrote the first draft of the "Praise of Folly," called by him "Encomium Moriae" and by his friends known as the "Moria."

The "Moria" is a witty satire in which "kings and princes, bishops and popes alike are shown to be in bondage to Folly, and no class of men is spared." Erasmus, secure in the freedom from persecution which he singularly enjoyed throughout his life, jibes at the great and the rich: the first part deals with the Divine Quality of Folly, the second with Examples from Life and Literature. The book became a popular favorite and has been reprinted and translated frequently.

The first edition was printed by Gilles Gourmont in Paris: it is undated, but the dedication bears date of June 9, 1511. The book was reprinted in August of 1511, and, at Strassburg in 1512. Forty-three editions appeared before 1536, when its author died. In 1515 Erasmus issued the first reprint under his own supervision, at the press of John Froben at Basle. This visit to Basle began in 1514, when Erasmus became associated with the great Basle printer as editor and proof reader, and Froben printed many of Erasmus's books, ending in 1540 with the nine volume works.

Now of this 1511 edition of the "Praise of Folly," printed by Froben of Basle, a copy came into the possession of a schoolmaster of Basle, one Oswald Myconius (or Molitor), and this copy reposes in the city where it was printed, having been secured in the seventeenth century as part of the Amerbach collection. Its importance is due solely to the fact that on the margins of the pages there are eighty-two pen and ink drawings to illustrate the text, credited to Hans Holbein the Younger.

Holbein came to Basle in 1514 or 1515, a city known throughout Europe as "a center of learning, a home of freedom, and as a lover of gaiety and the arts." In such an environment Holbein found congenial employ, and for Froben, Petri, Cratander, Wolff, and other printers he designed borders, initials, and pictures which were cut on wood and metal. He also is credited with three painted portraits of the great humanist. It is, therefore, quite understandable that he should have made these illustrations for the "Moria," though why he did is not known. They remained as original drawings only until 1676 when they were indifferently reproduced by Charles Patin in *Μορίας Εγκωμιον* and there have been later reproductions.

We now have an exact facsimile in photo-lithography (collotype) of the little book with its marginal illustrations, together with a careful study and account of the designs. The first volume contains the facsimile reproduction of the "Moria" in which the pictures occur: a typical specimen of Froben's work, with the text set in a large roman letter, surrounded by the excursus in smaller type. There are many manuscript notes by the original owner, Myconius, and the marginal designs. These are eighty-two in number, of which seventy-seven or seventy-eight are credited to Hans Holbein the Younger.

Without the original book for comparison, it is of course impossible to say how faithful has been the reproduction, but what internal evidence there is, as well as the recognized skill of European collotype artists (in this case the house of Orell Füssli of Zurich), would warrant the supposition that the work has been done with scrupulous care and fidelity.

The second volume contains the editorial treatment of this edition, written by H. A. Schmid and translated by Helen A. Tanzer. It is divided into chapters on Erasmus and More, Myconius, the Text, the Authorship of the Drawings, and various other pertinent matters, as well as a Bibliography and an Index. It is an admirable treatise on the Holbein illustrations, and is itself well equipped with miscellaneous illustrations and details of drawings. If its dates and minor statements do not always agree with other writers—as, for instance, in the matter of the editions published during Erasmus's lifetime—such disagreements are the very stuff of which scholarly treatises are made. The present writer is not, it need hardly be said, an authority on either Erasmus or Holbein: but that this work is of much value as a fairly complete study of a rather important book is apparent even to the unscholarly. The major point at issue apparently is the authenticity of the ascription of the drawings to Hans Holbein the Younger. The question was first raised by Jacob Clauser in 1578, and has been kept alive by Preserved Smith in his "Erasmus, a Study . . .," issued in 1923. To the editor of the present volume it appears that Clauser's doubts were largely unjustified: at least seventy-seven of them Schmid definitely attributes to Holbein, and he buttresses his argument by what would appear to be intelligent reasoning.

As the first authentic reproduction of a series of exquisite drawings by Holbein, as well as a detailed study in art criticism and bibliography, the book is of much value and importance. R.

PORTSMOUTH PLAZA, the Cradle of San Francisco. San Francisco: Printed by John Henry Nash. 1932.

WHEN is a book not a book? That is the conundrum which suggests itself on opening this book. Good text—for Mrs. Phillips has chosen an attractive subject, the city square in San Francisco known as Portsmouth Plaza, and in telling its story she has epitomized the passion and the turbulence, natural and human, of California. Good pictures—excellent redrawings of California scenes and pioneers illustrate the book. A good story—familiar, but always colorful, exciting, dramatic.

But the answer to the conundrum is that the book is not a book when you cannot see the text for the technique. The type (a good variety of Elzevir) is too large for the page, the decorative borders are pretty bad, and the book is awkward to hold and read (and it is a readable story). The composition and presswork are in Mr. Nash's careful and thorough workmanship. The impression on the reviewer is that there is too much typography to the page. R.

HOFER SALE

PHILIP HOFER, Esq., of New York City, offers for sale a large and interesting selection from his library, at auction on the evening of January 12th, at the Ritter-Hopson Galleries, 45 West 57th Street. Many rare volumes in modern printing are included.

One of the outstanding features is a group of eighteen Ashendene Press books, including the *Ecclesiastes* (27 copies printed, not for sale), the *Rubaiyat* (50 copies, not for sale), and numerous presentation and vellum copies, mostly in original bindings.

A Kelmscott Chaucer, Rogers's Centaur and Dry Cow Fishing, many Limited Editions Club publications, a full set of the *Colophon*, other Rogers, Random House, Shakespeare Head, Kelmscott, and Doves Press books are included. Seven volumes of Baskerville's "quarto classics" are offered, bound by Edwards of Halifax. Numerous firsts of English literature are included, as well as books with colored plates. Notable in this latter group is Ackerman's History of Oxford, including the supplementary plates.

It is a noteworthy collection, and the sale will be of much interest to collectors. R.

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