

The Clearing House

Conducted by AMY LOVEMAN

Inquiries in regard to the choice of books should be addressed to MISS LOVEMAN, c/o *The Saturday Review*. A stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed for reply.

"OF MENTES FUL"

WE have been in pursuit of the elusive, or the pervasive, mint for H. M. of Washington, D. C., who has a young friend who wants references to the fragrant herb for an article he is preparing on "Mint in Literature." We take it the young man (or, for all we know, it may be a young girl who lives behind H. M.'s title of friend) wants allusions to the plant and not to its decoctions, convivial or medicinal, so we omit all mention of chivalrous Southern colonels and long glasses with ice tinkling in their clear green fluid, and of tablets against indigestion, or of penny-royal, that potent oil so effective against mosquitoes, and we make no reference to the lyrics with which spearmint and peppermint enliven the streetcars of America. Mint, we have discovered, is one of the most widespread of herbs, growing in profusion through all parts of the temperate world. And, "curiouser and curiouser," as Alice would have said, mice have a great aversion to it; a few leaves of it are said to keep them at a distance. Its name is derived from the nymph, Minthe, a favorite of Pluto's, whose wife Proserpine metamorphosed the maiden into an herb out of jealousy. Ovid makes reference to this event in his lines

*Could Plato's Queen with jealous fury storm
And Minthe to a fragrant herb transform?*

There's reference to mint in the New Testament, in Matthew, XXIII, 23, "Woe unto you . . . for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin," and almost as familiar are Shakespeare's lines from *LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST*: "I am that flower.—That mint.—That columbine." It is in *THE ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE* that Chaucer's lovely passage appears:

*Tho wente I forth on my right hond
Doun by a litel path I fond
Of mentes ful, and fenelgrene;*

Barnes, the author of a poem entitled *PARTHENOPHIL ODE*, written about 1593, placed mint in delightful company:

*Fragrant violets, and sweet mynthe,
Matched with purple hyacinth.*

We haven't the slightest doubt that longer application would unearth a vast number of references for H. M.'s friend, but we've had to make a hasty garnering lest by delaying too long we send in our information too late for it to be of use to him. We know where he could undoubtedly get much fascinating material, however, and even without asking her we give the name of its possessor. Mrs. Marion Parris Smith of Bryn Mawr, Pa., has a varied collection of old herbals on her bookshelves and an enormous amount of information about the literature of plants tucked away in her mind. We'll write to her for more references if H. M. wants us to do so.

A "SCIENCE" OF NUMBERS

We (or rather our Alter Ego, Ruth Flint) have been scouring the town for information for J. J. of *New York City*, who wants to know who is responsible for Numerology—both the name and the device. "The word," J. J. writes, "is of so recent an origin that it is included only in the latest dictionary." Well, our investigations seem to show that it is in large part the creation of Clifford W. Cheasley, who, in a pamphlet entitled *CHEASLEY'S NUMEROLOGY AT A GLANCE*, defines his science as "a system of numbers for measuring the vibration of the letters of the alphabet, so that human personality, desire, thought, action, and experience may be easily understood in accurate mathematical values." When Mr. Cheasley came to America from London in 1913, Numerology, "as a practical phase of modern psychology," was, he says, virtually unknown. According to his statement he is recognized as the creator of the consistent method of Practical Numerology. He gives credit, however, in the structure of his science to Mrs. L. Dow Balliett for the calculation of the vowels in names; to Dr. Julia Seton for the calculation of the consonants, and the laws of "Similar," "Complementaries," "Opposites," and to Artie Mae Blackburn and Valyre Judy for the value of the vowels in the first names.

We've discovered from Mr. Cheasley's

pamphlet into which we hurriedly dipped that we are in our Second Cycle, and that "it is time to listen rather than to talk." That being so, the rest is silence, at least so far as J. J.'s query is concerned. We'll send him a clipping of a discussion which once appeared in *The Saturday Review* on the origin of the word "Ouija," about which he inquires.

DAYS THE WORLD CELEBRATES

What with chess and golf one week, and herbs and Numerology the next, we feel that the ramifications of literature are many. We'll play on the fringes of it a little longer by taking up next the request of M. C. C. of *Philadelphia, Pa.*, for books in reference to holidays peculiar to certain countries. We think M. C. C. will find what she wants in Edward M. Deem's *HOLY DAYS AND HOLIDAYS* (Funk & Wagnalls), a treasury of material relating to the *festas* of all nations. Mary E. Hazeltine's *ANNIVERSARIES AND HOLIDAYS* (American Library Association) contains a calendar of days and instructions for observing them, lists of books about holidays, advice on program making, clippings, pamphlets, pictures, etc., and a classified and general index. Harry S. Stuff's *THE BOOK OF HOLIDAYS*, published by the *Times-Mirror* Company of Los Angeles, covers the "what, when, where, and why" of holidays. That is to say it gives discussion as to their sources, and the customs that attach to them, and considerable chronological data.

THE MODERN NOVEL

And now we're back at literature again with the inquiry of M. F. of *New Britain, Conn.* for material for a talk on the modern novel. She is to make an address before a business girls' league, and she wants it to be "short, snappy, and interesting." The snappiness she'll have to put into it herself for most of our writers on the novel treat their subject with high respect and approach it from a critical rather than an expository angle. She'll find excellent source books for her lecture, however, in such works as Carl Van Doren's *THE AMERICAN NOVEL* and his *CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN NOVELISTS* (Macmillan), in *THE NOVEL OF TOMORROW* and *THE SCOPE OF FICTION* (Bobbs-Merrill), a volume to which twelve American novelists have contributed and which originally appeared as a symposium in the *New Republic*; in *THE MODERN NOVEL* (Knopf), by Wilson Follett, and Elizabeth Drew's *THE MODERN NOVEL* (Harcourt, Brace), and in Wilbur Cross's *THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL* (Macmillan). André Chevalley's *THE MODERN ENGLISH NOVEL* analyzes Anglo-Saxon fiction from the point of view of a scholarly Frenchman. In Grant C. Knight's *THE NOVEL IN ENGLISH* (Long & Smith) selected bibliographies of English and American novels follow each chapter. M. F. will find most enlightening and helpful in her preparation for a discussion of the novel such works as E. M. Forster's *ASPECTS OF THE MODERN NOVEL* (Harcourt, Brace), Percy Lubbock's *THE CRAFT OF FICTION* (Scribners), Edith Wharton's *THE WRITING OF FICTION*, and C. E. Montague's *A WRITER'S NOTES ON HIS CRAFT* (Doubleday, Doran). The late Stuart P. Sherman's *ON CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE* (Holt) contains analyses of modern novelists by one of the most brilliant critics of recent years. As a sort of backbone to the general study of the novel the indispensable works are, of course, *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE* and *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE*. The many volumes in the original edition contain excellent bibliographies which have been omitted from the cheaper edition of the *AMERICAN LITERATURE* just issued.

A FRIEND INDEED

We feel like Miss Betsy in David Copperfield who took such solid satisfaction in "being set right" by Mr. Dick. We feel like her because we too are relieved to have someone come to the rescue when we are at sea. Mr. Geoffrey Gomme, of Edgar H. Wells & Co., writes in to supplement our recent reply to F. W. B. of *Hartford, Conn.*, with the statement that T. E. Lawrence is co-author with C. L. Woolley of two volumes on archaeology, one a report, with a chapter on the Greek inscription by M. N. Tod, entitled *THE WILDERNESS OF ZIN* (London: Palestine Exploration Foundation, No. 3), and the other, *CARCHEMISH*, a report of excavations conducted by Woolley and Lawrence, published by the British Museum.

OUT TODAY

The most
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The OLD MAN DIES

By ELIZABETH SPRIGGE

Each member of old Thomas Rushbrooke's large family lived continuously under the dark veil of his tyrannical will. Each one of them strove in a different way to escape.

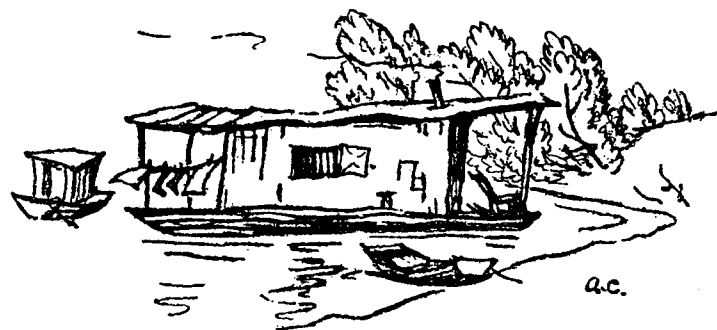
This brilliant and deeply moving story of modern life depicts the clash of wills in a large family, the brief moments of understanding, the way in which its members are bound by blood and separated by their hopes and desires.

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Here is a romantic novel of Mississippi River folk whose simple destinies follow its wild waters. Burman knows the strange life of the lower Mississippi, the bayou country, the shanty-boat people—that vast region around which fable and legend have been woven. Filled with racy anecdote and picturesque scenes, this is an excellent yarn, proving again that the critics' comparison of Mr. Burman to *Mark Twain* is not without point. \$2

STEAMBOAT ROUND THE BEND

by BEN LUCIEN BURMAN

Illustrated by Alice Caddy

FARRAR & RINEHART, 9 E. 41st STREET, N. Y.

OVER THE COUNTER

Are you literary with a capital L or do you sometimes break down and read with no particular purpose other than a desire for inconsequential entertainment? Many of us admit liking detective stories and look to *THE CRIMINAL RECORD* (page 222 this week) for clues to the good ones.

Beginning in this issue (page 225) you will find a new and convenient guide to the light novels of romance and adventure, western stories, etc., which enjoy such a popular sale that we call our chart *OVER THE COUNTER*. You will find it of practical value when you go into your bookshop or rental library.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW, 25 West 45th Street, New York City

Children's Bookshelf

By KATHERINE ULRICH

WHO would have thought that Walt Disney's (plus the baby's) "Three Little Pigs" would introduce grown-ups to their favorite 1933 theme song; that graybeards and small fry would chant with equal glee, "Who's afraid of the big, bad wolf?" Well, it just goes to show that: (a) more essays on American humor will soon be written; (b) youth no longer holds a big monopoly on the question mark; (c) a solid foundation of answered, answerable questions may save a lot of asking later.

M. Ilin, the author of *NEW RUSSIA'S PRIMER*, *BLACK ON WHITE*, *WHAT TIME IS IT?* contributes this fall, 100,000 *WHYS*, a *Trip Around the Room* (Lippincott: \$1.50). Any casual parent might well tremble at the notion of so many "whys" in a seemingly ordinary room. But Mr.

Ilin moves from sink to stove to china closet to wardrobe, etc., to reveal to a child's curious mind the background of everyday living—why we drink water, why we eat cooked instead of raw potatoes, what and how our ancestors ate, why clothes keep us warm, and the like. Both author and illustrator, artist N. Lapshin, make the material clear and bright, but the book smacks too strongly of school room "fun" to be a success with American children. Yet Mr. Ilin knows, as few writers do, how to shape facts into a lively adventure: witness his two excellent books, *BLACK ON WHITE*, the story of books, and *WHAT TIME IS IT?*, the story of clocks (Lippincott: \$1.50 each).

To go back to where life began, *THE STORY OF EARTH AND SKY* is told by Carleton and Helwig Washington in collaboration with Fredrick Rud (Century, \$3.50). Mr. Washington is Superintendent of the renowned Winnetka Schools and Mr. Rud,

Supervisor of Elementary Science in the same schools. Their stories about the universe have withstood the acid classroom test. *MAN'S LONG CLIMB*, by Marion Lansing with many illustrations by F. H. Horvath (Little, Brown: \$1.75), pictures, for the most part, in easy narrative form, the gradual growth of knowledge in the human race. Very informal and readable is Stephen King-Hall's *A CHILD'S STORY OF CIVILIZATION* (Morrow) which appears this fall as a dollar reprint. It is the worthy intent of the author "to teach a child to regard all aspects of knowledge as being part of a whole . . . and to realize that the present is rooted in the past."

The publishers state on the jacket of *THE JUNIOR OUTLINE OF HISTORY*, written by I. O. Evans with the permission of H. G. Wells (Appleton: \$2), that it is a long-awaited counterpart for boys and girls of the famous "Outline." Our wager is that boys and girls who happen upon the library shelf which holds the original Wells will gloat over their "discovery" while the well intended junior version (Merry Christmas from Aunt Mary) gathers dust in the play room.

ERRATUM

Our last Bookshelf spoke enthusiastically about *POWDER, THE STORY OF A COLT, A DUCHESS AND THE CIRCUS* (Smith and Haas: \$2), which, due to the printer's unfortunate misunderstanding, appeared as *PONDER*—another breed of horses, most certainly.

The New Books

(Continued from page 222)

him, and from which he emerges no longer in love with her—are it must be admitted built on a reliable formula; but in a book of this kind the only thing that matters is what is made of the formula; and "Bare Living" makes a great deal. The wise cracks are really amusing, and the characters are really sympathetic. And the farcical situations, which involve the missing evidence in a stock market swindle, two fights, a hold-up, and the financial trials of the promoter of the nudist colony, who is trying to Organize Nudism Under the Blue Eagle, are funny from the first, and get faster and funnier as the book goes on. It is an absurd, light-hearted, and pleasant book. B. D.

JULIAN GRANT LOSES HIS WAY. By Claude Houghton. Doubleday, Doran. 1933. \$2.50.

Mr. Claude Houghton is certainly one of the most interesting of English post-war novelists. He has the sovereign quality of imagination; each of his books embodies an authentic idea in original dramatic—sometimes almost melodramatic—projection. Each betrays metaphysical awareness, and each has real social awareness. His writings are of his day, though they bear simultaneously a more universal, and perhaps thereby a more permanent reference.

His reputation has increased with every novel he has published. This is the seventh, and if it does not stand higher than his previous best (though some would say so) it stands beside them. It is the story of a man's life, his essential mental and emotional development, set in the frame of an after-life, his home-coming in heaven—or is it hell? Julian Grant took the first step from "his way" when he swept a girl out of his life to her disregarded death. Not of course that Mr. Houghton would have had him tread any flatly moralistic path—he flies at higher game than that! Julian's fault was that, like the modern world, he let his head, his intellectual curiosities, his selfish desires, rule his heart, draining his life of the color and sweetness of love, until, having exhausted all the possibilities of novelty in experience, existence became to him barren and terrible. He is a figure who sweeps a Dostoevskian scope on a rather less than Dostoevskian scale; he is more brain than flesh and blood. But Mr. Houghton is genuinely attempting something too seldom attempted in current literature, a tackling of spiritual problems in imaginative terms.

G. W.

FROM AN OZARK HOLLER. Stories of the Ozark Mountain Folk. By Vance Randolph. Vanguard. 1933. \$2.

Mr. Vance Randolph is an acknowledged authority on the Ozark mountaineers, and a most competent writer besides. Therefore this book will be eagerly taken up by those who like good writing, and

care for the more ancient regional cultures of the States. Here Mr. Randolph has collected twenty-two stories, or perhaps one should say tales. Several of these have appeared in *Folk-Say* and in the *American Mercury*, but by no means all. They are, however, of the sort which belongs to those periodicals—racy, authentic, and overlooking few opportunities in the tradition of Boccaccio. They are presented with copious use of the Ozark dialect, and have a ring of reality about them lacking to the work of other artists in this kind. The "furriners" come into the picture also, and though there is not much poetry in the book, there is abundant convincing detail. The stories read as though their author were a wise and observant, and somewhat salacious old man. But perhaps, in the mountains, youth is abbreviated, as in all pioneer societies, and a man becomes salacious before his time. It is a grotesque fate which has befallen the mountaineers—to be pioneers shelved in the middle of a roaring industrial society. Mr. Randolph has adopted the only manner suited to such folk of a played-out culture. He has brought forward every type of mountaineer without omitting any age, sex, or variety.

The tales are also of every variety within their kind: tragic, ironic, comic, sordid, farcical, and salty. The author has been true to the general spirit of the hill people, scrupulously accurate in matters of folk-lore, and inspired by a zest and gusto all too rare in our daily ration of fiction. The book is admirably illustrated with woodcuts by Richard A. Loederer.

S. V.

TO A GOD UNKNOWN. By John Steinbeck. Robert O. Ballou. 1933. \$2.

A novel such as this one prompts us to speculate as to how much there is really left in the pantheistic view of the world for writers in twentieth century America. Steinbeck's is not the only novel dedicated "to a god unknown." His is unusual, and curious, because it serves to evoke, not one god, but a great many—almost every mysterious power, one is tempted to say, from Pan to the Freudian Unconscious.

"To a God Unknown" is a mystical and symbolical tale. Its characters worship nature, fear certain stones, offer sacrifices to trees, talk to the spirits of their fathers, suffer defeat and death at the hands of mysterious powers, and in general show their dependence upon an unseen Will. The fact that the characters are given American names and a New England ancestry (the story is laid in California a hundred years ago) does not alter its essential nature. The difficulty is that the particular gods the author is striving to evoke are not given names or their images even approximate outlines.

Joseph Wayne migrated to California from a New England farm, settled on a piece of land in the valley of "Nuestra Sonora," and brought his family to form a colony. Soon after Joseph's arrival, his father's spirit—so Joseph believes—enters a large tree under which his house is built. Joseph turns to the tree for inspiration and guidance, talks to it and offers sacrifices to it.

A stone in a nearby grove he also feels to have a mysterious power. From it rushes a stream—the last to dry up when drought strikes and the homestead is deserted. On this rock Joseph's wife falls and is killed, and here he ends his own life. "I am the land, and I am the rain." He has always felt himself to be the source of all life on the farm. And, sure enough, the rain pelts down just as he expires, to make the land fertile again.

The book is full of worship—worship of the sun, the land, nature, the sexual act. And yet, curiously enough, it is almost entirely without religious feeling. It does paint a fairly interesting and (apparently) accurate picture of the region and the life of the times. Steinbeck can do the *genre* novel if he tries. We hope he can find a more stable and definite principle upon which to build his next novel.

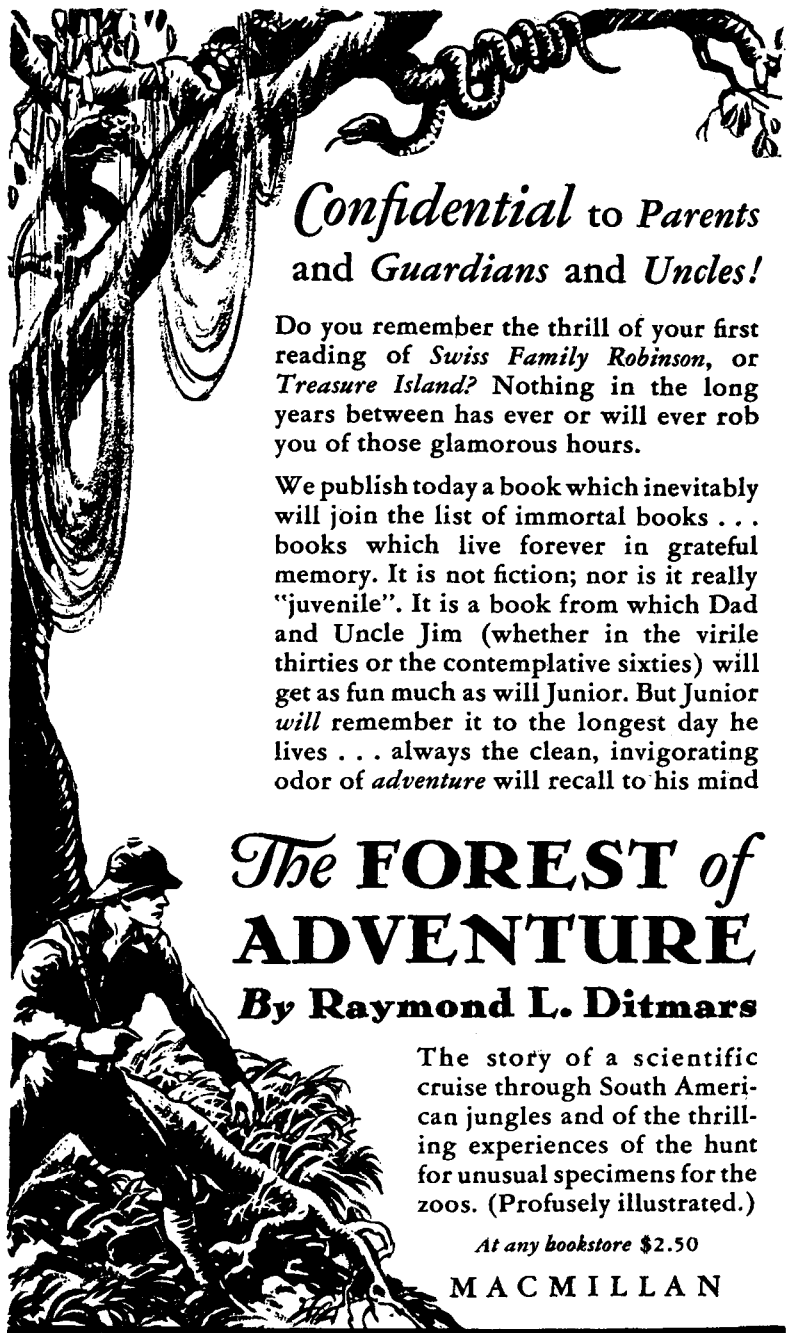
C. S.

International

THE NEW RUSSIA. Edited by Jerome Davis. Day. 1933. \$2.50.

The inquiring professor, eager to discover the status of his particular specialty in the Soviet Union, bulks large among the few thousand American tourists who now visit Russia every summer. The present volume, which is a symposium, with twelve contributors, gives a fair cross-section of the viewpoint of the academic visitor with a tendency to be sympathetic toward the new Soviet order.

Professor Jerome Davis, the editor of the book, writes the chapters on American-Soviet relations and on the Commu-



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