The New Books

Drama

STEVEDORE. By Paul Peters and George Sklar. Covici-Friede. 1934. \$1.50.

JIG SAW. By Dawn Powell. Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. \$2.

YELLOW JACK. By Sidney Howard and Paul de Kruif. Harcourt, Brace. 1934. \$2.

It has often been remarked that Negroes make the best actors we have. Many a weak or absurd play has been made into a passable evening's entertainment by the acting of Negroes. But "Stevedore," by Messrs. Peters and Sklar, is the first play we have seen in which the beneficent influence of the Negroes has reached the writing itself. The authors seem to have been thinking, while writing their dialogue, how Negroes would act it-for some of their directness, credulity, and simplicity has warmed the lines written for them. As for the play, which tells the story of a dispute between Negro stevedores and their bosses in New Orleans, and the race riot which develops out of it by way of the usual perjured white girl -it is only another one of those "proletarian" or "socially conscious" or "propaganda" plays. The first scene sets the tone: a loud and meaningless and violent squabble between the white girl and her lover. Then we go on to union men with hearts of gold, and scabs who are nothing but bullies and cowards, and bosses that give punches in the jaw: a Boy Scout parable, in a word, which would make the most sanctimonious Victorian moralist look like a Maupassant by comparison. But the Negroes remain fairly human throughout. They do not fit into these simple legends. Is it because they lack our pale-face hypocrisy? Or are they simply too relaxed to catch our abstract rages?

Miss Dawn Powell's "Jig Saw" is a play about the penthouse-dwelling whites, who are neither hypocrites, nor sectarian crusaders, nor even bosses: all that's the matter with them, as they frequently tell us and each other, is that they are utterly futile and unreal. The unimportant plot is based on the return of a schoolgirl to her divorced mother's household, where she finds a complicated but unstable system of love affairs flourishing. She picks out the man she likes best (who happens to be the one her mother intended for her next lover) and marries him. We have no quarrel with Miss Powell for writing about these mayflies, but she might at least make her play more interesting than the may-flies themselves. "Serena Blandish," which had a brief run on Broadway a few years ago, exhibited a similar set of people, but subtly distorted, as though they had been viewed from an odd angle or under a peculiar light. The pleasure and amusement lay in the clever distortion, which gave one a perspective on the people and so freed one from their actual vulgarities. But Miss Powell serves hers up to us just as they are. Even their wisecracks are no better than what you hear. Reading her play is like sitting through a long cocktail party cold sober.

What would you write about, if you were a dramatist? Something to hold a Broadway audience for a couple of hours, it must be; something a little new for a change, people are tired of sex; yet something obvious enough to penetrate brains fed on publishers' money-makers. Mr. Sidney Howard had the bright idea of staging a chapter from "Microbe-Hunters," the one about Yellow Fever, or "Yellow Jack." It seemed to have a theme of the proper gravity, man's battle with disease; the word science, especially when applied science is understood, is still capable of preparing us to receive solemnities. Men in white coats are only a bit less thrilling than men in khaki coats; and the war atmosphere is there too; brief and pregnant sentences, stiffs, stiff upper lips, and good shrewd masculine comedy without malice, based on the fact that the Irish and the Jews are soldiers together in Uncle Sam's army. Mr. Howard thought it would be a good idea to make such a play, and he did, and "Yellow Jack" is it.

F. F.

Fiction

A LAW UNTO THEMSELVES. By Loveday Prior. Little, Brown. 1934. \$2.50.

It is a safe bet that any novel that does not stem directly from its author's own times, his race, and the genius of his language, will be no more than a show of strength, a literary exercise whose intrinsic merits will rise less from its creator's profundity as an artist than from his dexterity as a craftsman. Even the great have failed to breathe life into the past (Flaubert's "Salammbô" and "The Temptation of Saint Anthony" come to mind), and their efforts in that direction have remained pleasant diversions; their scholarship and sensitivity have succeeded, at the most, in evoking an authentic atmosphere entertaining for its remoteness from our own times, for its air of verisimilitude.

Miss Prior has done a fine job of reconstruction; her period, the thirteenth century; her people, the feudal barons of Austria. The least that can be asked of an author embarked on such a task is that his researches fuse with his method and his exposition, that they do not obtrude upon the reader. These difficult adjustments Miss Prior has made. Out of her pages rises a picture of the Middle Ages such as it might well have been; the stern brutality of its men, the routine of their plundering lives, the bitter physical subjection of their women. We learn what these people ate, how their castles were appointed, how their minds worked, what were the codes by which they lived their lives. Entertainment is provided in full measure through the abundance of factual detail, fascinating in itself. Into the bargain, the author has a pleasant tale to tell, and if she tells it in the terms of her elected period, in the rhythms and with the phraseology of those times, she is quite within her rights, and the narrative gains heightened "truth to life" through such a method. The tale she tells is too involved for condensation in a review; it winds its way through a long book, at times moving in its intensity, at times dùll through a sort of dilutionthe necessity to skip years or pass lightly over bare details. But it is generally interesting, always readable, occasionally exciting. Though gowned as carefully as she has been able to dress them, the Count Ludwig of Feilmar, his two wives, his son Adalbert, the degenerate; his daughter Luise, the clever; her husband, the beast Wolfgang von Maienburg—none rises from the status of fictional characters, nor do their schemes and machinations, their aspirations and ambitions for power, for wealth, for ascendancy over each other, carry more conviction than the events of

(Continued on next page)

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
CANDIDATE FOR LILIES Roger East (Knopf: \$2.)	centric summons heirs	effectual professional,	Fair
THE RUSE OF THE VANISHED WOMEN Val Gielgud (Crime Club: \$2.)	girl-friend stumble into mysterious midnight adventures in Suffolk	Co-author of "London Calling" gets off to fast start but finishes lame- ly in white-slave (?) story with surprise twist.	ing
THE HOBGOBLIN MURDER Kay Cleaver Strahan (Bobbs-Merrill: \$2.)	maid recluse murdered during Coast visit of poor relations. Lynn	Incredible situation, pretty sticky in certain aspects, produces faint nausea, but one does read on to end which flouts intelligence.	Thin

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Double-Crostics: Number 15

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINI-TIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered (these numbers appear at the beginning of each definition) and you are thereby able to tell how many letters are in the required word. When you have guessed a word each letter is to be written in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from

DEFINITIONS

WORDS I. 95-151-43-76. Unsubstantial, delicate.

II. 25-5-59-135-40-148-121. Beginning again.

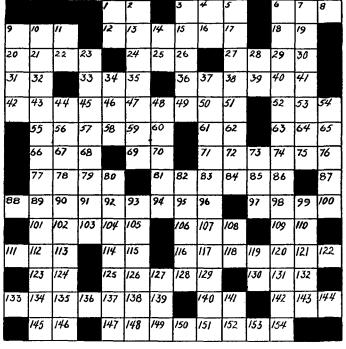
III. 113-35-149-51-98-77. Appointed meeting places. Weaker of two contestants. VI. 82-72-64. Famous victim of sleeping sickness (first name). VII. 7-31-60-152-16-26-41. Disputes over trifles. VIII. 47 - 27 - 88 - 143 - 124 - 103 - 133. Formless, confused. IX. 134-39-86. Prominent citizen of Sodom. . 78-91-37-139. Unctuous, ole-aginous. XI. 67-6-109-87-126-107. Book by Sir Thomas More. XII. 127-110-83-20-144-65. Granular; courageous.XIII. 105-62-114-142-66-130. To associate familiarly. XIV. 11-115-74-18-70-30-150-23. In a dignified manner. XV. 131-111-8-52-2-100-71-94-17.
Without variation.
XVI. 38-44-1-85-33-118. Descent from sublime to ridiculous.
XVII. 106-119-68-128-89-53-141.
Persian god of light. XVIII. 13-125-42-4-137-116-140-36-101-3. Conferences. XIX. 154-102-48-9. Immediately thereafter. XX. 19-132-145-10-79-123-46. Marks of infamy or disgrace. XXI. 34-96-81-75-45-122. Courteous, affable. XXII. 120-99-129-92-153. Quantity produced at one time. XXIII. 14-103-54-90-138-28. Shrub used in victory wreaths.

XXIV. 117-63-97-57. Scene of Blucher's victory, 1813.

XXV. 61-69-55-32-80-29-12. Loose-hanging rags.

left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

Either before (preferably) or after placing the letters in their squares you should write the words you have guessed on the blank lines which appear to the right in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter. The initial letters of this list of words spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Unless otherwise indicated, the author is English or American.



SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (NUMBER 14)

EDMUND WALLER—"GO LOVELY ROSE"

Go lovely rose . . Tell her that's young And shuns to have her graces spied, That hadst thou sprung In deserts where no men abide Thou must have uncommended died.

The New Books

(Continued from preceding page) a clever fairy tale. As such, Miss Prior's novel is a success; as a reconstruction of the life of other times, it bears conviction; it could not hope for more.

A. C. B.

International

MODERN RUSSIA. As Seen by an Englishwoman. By Cicely Hamilton. Dutton.

Miss Hamilton is a wide-awake Englishwoman, who has had a varied experience as journalist, actress, successful playwright, and more recently as the author of several serious travel books. If her Russian impressions are not startling in their novelty, they are pleasantly unpretentious, honest, intelligent, and marked by common sense.

Prefacing her story with the observation that Soviet Russia is viewed emotionally by myriads of distant observers, who see it as a symbol of heaven, on the one hand, and on the other, of horror, she makes every endeavor to see things as they are and to turn in an objective report. Granting what the Bolsheviks would doubtless describe as the "hopelessly bourgeois bias" implied in such concluding observations as "you cannot plan art in Government departments, you cannot plan love, and you cannot plan the grace of God," she succeeds admirably.

She discusses children, marriage, birthcontrol, and kindred subjects with the background of one who has already studied and lectured on feminist topics in her own country, and she is quietly amused here, as elsewhere, by the common assumption of Soviet Russians that much that already passes as a matter of course in the civilized West is their own private discovery. There is a similar note of gentle irony in some of her references to unemployment. Everybody has been told, of course, that there is no such thing in Soviet Russia, and when Miss Hamilton pointed out the frequent beggars and worse that she encountered in the streets and about railway stations, her Intourist guide was surprised and hurt.

'You're the only tourist," the latter exclaimed, "who has ever said we had people out of work. All my English and American tourists say we have no unemployed." She noticed and was shocked, as the English are likely to be, by the halfstarved horses, but her guide was again offended when she mentioned the fact.

"We have beautiful horses in Russia," retorted the guide. "Every one knows we have beautiful horses. But there's a reason why they're not getting enough food now. The kulaks are hiding fodder to spite us-burning it in holes in the ground. Every one knows that."

Miss Hamilton talks of theatres, of the Russian Riviera (Crimea), of the revolt against religion, of trains and journeys, of the Five Year Plan, and various other matters. All her reporting of actual conditions is backed up by what appears to be a rather thorough reading into Russia's

Travel

ATTENDING MARVELS. By George Gaylord Simpson. Macmillan. 1934. \$3.

Mr. Simpson went down to Patagonia as a member of the Scarritt Expedition to dig fossil bones for the American Museum of Natural History. The purely scientific results of that expedition have been, or will be, chronicled elsewhere. Being interested as well in the "attending marvels"—live beasts and humans, food, lodging, climate, and what not -- Mr. Simpson has been moved to set down his diary-like observations in a longish, honest, and comfortably entertaining if not wildly exciting book.

Patagonia is a hard, bleak, dour land, with "wind, cold, drought, pebbles where soil should be and thorn bushes for grass.' The digging, camping, and trekking about took place in the neighborhood of 45 degrees South Latitude, the South Temperate equivalent of Montreal, but a very different scene and climate. The wind blows furiously and practically all the timesuch a lambasting of flora and fauna as we know nothing about in our part of the world. Sand pelted the tents and sifted into the food. Mr. Simpson tells of descending a hillside, where normally one would expect more or less to cling to the surface, with his body leaning forward into space at an incredible angle-actually leaning on the wind! And the wind was so terrific and so sustained that you could safely assume such a posture and depend on the gale to hold you up.

It is treeless sheep-country, where not empty of humans altogether, and all but a few of the sheepmen, in some of the more favored portions, live a grubby, hand-tomouth existence, just above the subsistence level, and often scarcely that. Money was made, as in many other parts of the world, during the abnormal conditions produced by the Great War, but it was quickly spent, and in general the country seems destined to remain more or less permanently desert.

It might, therefore, have been "created expressly for poor, misshapen, muddle-headed beasts." The guanaco is the commonest of these—a sort of inferior llama, to the unscientific eye, with "a head like that of a hornless deer, long ears like a mule, a neck that tries but fails to reach the giraffe standard, a scrawny, shapeless body, and gangling legs like those of a young colt." They aren't domesticated, as a rule, but are hunted, especially when young, for their hides. A Patagonia without guanacos would be, Mr. Simpson thinks, "dismal indeed, unthinkable."

The difficulties, delicacies, and excitements of fossil-hunting-for which Patagonia is famous among all scientists interested in this branch of research-are touched on constantly both in text and picture, but as already remarked, the author reserves the scientific side of the expedition for a more informed audience. There are glimpses, sometimes amusing, of the hard-bitten humans, including Boer colonists, who are sprinkled over this desolate region, and similarly hard-bitten Fords. One pleasant aspect of the narrative is the absence of nature or other

Latest Books Received

BELLES LETTRES

S. T. Coleridge's Treatise on Method. Ed. A. D. Snyder. London: Constable.

BIOGRAPHY

Pirate Junk, C. Johnson, Scribners, \$2

EDUCATION

A Short History of Psychology. W. S. Hulin. Holt. Psychology. R. S. Woodworth. Holt. Homemaking Education in the High School. M. Williamson and M. S. Lyle. Appleton. INTERNATIONAL

Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839. P. E. Mosely. Harvard Univ. Pr. JUVENILE The Japanese Garden. M. Knight. Dutton. 2. The Stray Child. R. Joyce. Dutton. \$1.50.

MISCELLANEOUS

Papers on Public Credit, Commerce and Finance. A. Hamilton. Ed. S. McKee, Jr. Col-umbla Univ. Pr. \$3. That Heart of Yours. S. C. Smith. Lippincott. \$2. Individual Dif-ferences. F. S. Freeman. Holt.

PAMPHLETS

Memories of Lincoln. T. D. Jones. New York: Pioneers Press. \$1. For Legalized Birth Control. New Republic. 25 cents. Pragma-tism and the Crisis of Democracy. C. W. Morris. Univ. of Chicago Pr. 25 cents.

POETRY

 \boldsymbol{A} Sword Unearthed. M. Loftus. Oxford: Shakespeare Head.

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