# The New Books

#### Fiction

DESIGN FOR A STAIRCASE. By Guy Pocock. Dutton. 1934. \$2.50.

The eight families living on Stair 7 of a London block of flats had no contact with one another till a fire one night got them all acquainted. Of their interaction thereafter Mr. Pocock makes a story which, in spite of alcoholism, smallpox, insanity, adultery, divorce, and death manages to retain the somewhat sugary constructiveness of a juvenile morality tale. Take it on a train trip; it's rather better reading than the sort of magazines you find in a club car.

E. D.

LIFE WITHOUT END. By Graham Seton. Farrar & Rinehart. 1934. **\$2**.

Perhaps the most that can be said for this book is that the author's sincerity is more obvious than his logic. Sincerity is hardly a virtue, however, when it serves to emphasize the beautiful comradeship of war and deals in sentimental slogans that would make sacrifice the "science of power." (Mr. Seton is a Lieutenant-Colonel as well as a lyricist.) The purpose of the novel is apparently to show that the soulless discoveries of Freud and the "fustian" doctrines of Karl Marx are murdering the Christian spirit. To emphasize the finality of this thesis, the first and last chapters are called "Alpha" and "Omega," warning of the author's dull determination to point the philosophy of his story. He supports his belief with flabby rhetoric, tacked on to the description of a noble spirit wounded by post-war effort at revaluation and finding its wings again in a vision of God which, for Mr. Seton at least, is the final retort to science and its dependent, cynicism.

"Life Without End" is worth reading as a study in confusion. It was intended as something of the sort, but the author's own blind-spots are more indicative than those of his leading character. Hugh Richmond, of a glorious line of military Richmonds, decides to devote his life to the betterment of his fellow-men. At Oxford he is chiefly spiritual but also a cricket star in his free time. As a pastor he is God and Adonis to his little flock, but he bravely gives up the peace of English country life to become an officer in the war. This is the acme of generosity. With bright English sportsmanship. war and cricket are carefully connected, as in "Journey's End," but Sheriff's mood of nervous horror is replaced here by the spirit of Christ, which appears as a vision to Richmond and a dying friend. The hero's soul-mate nurses him to recovery from a vague wound but cannot save him from the ravages of scientific inquiry that follow the war. With easy categorizing science is personified by a breaker of vision who influences Richmond to renounce his belief in Christian doctrines and to contemplate suicide.

At this point in his narrative Mr. Seton

leaps into a passage of invective, in the manner if not spirit of Romain Rolland. With splendid conviction he classes psycho-analysts as degenerates and all modern writing as a "literature of verbal improprieties." Richmond sees the light and returns to God and the hearth, leaving the General Strike to stew in its own implications. The author, we feel, is not so fortunate. If the Christian spirit can survive only through nineteenth century economics and in one religious frame there will be more than one lost generation. And Mr. Seton has not even the gift of language with which to defend himself. E. C.

DUCK'S BACK. By Kate Mary Bruce. Day. 1934. \$2.50.

In this, her first novel to be published in America, Mrs. Bruce's accomplishment is slender, and in more than one respect she demonstrates the defects of her virtues. Sincere and earnest to the point of being almost humorless—if you except a light-hearted but heavy-handed attempt to poke fun at her second main character —ambitious to a degree that cruelly intensifies her shortcomings as a novelist, "Duck's Back" moves slowly, and mostly in an exceedingly dull fashion, to a conclusion that is just short of being faintly nauseating.

Sara Hurst is the glamorous and compelling heroine off whose lovely back other people's feelings, hopes, aspirations, ideas, and very lives glide effortlessly. She is a raving beauty and she knows it; she is a man-eater who in the course of the novel sucks the very life-blood from two husbands and comes perilously close to ruining a third. But Helen Kent, the spinster-sister of her first husband, achieves a momentary triumph over Sara when she diverts her third prospect's attention to Sara's almost-as-glamorous but infinitely-more-human young daughter, Honey. Such an ending would have been much too Ethel M. Dell for Mrs. Bruce, whose sincerity goes the limit in this instance, who apparently felt that nothing short of a situation closer to life would be acceptable. The spinster in her turn becomes the victim of the malevolent woman, abandoning a lucrative writing-contract in Hollywood to become Sara's personal slave.

Mrs. Bruce is to be commended for her sure instinct in not ending the novel at its first climax—the happy wedding, the defeat of the vampire, the receipt, by Helen Kent, of a contract for her play from Hollywood. It is impossible, however, to commend her for the totally unconvincing manner in which she has handled practically every situation in her book, so that, as though by a masterstroke of genius, situations ordinarily sound assume an air of unparalleled artificiality. The beauty, the diabolical non-

(Continued on next page)

The Criminal	Record
The Saturday Review's Guide to	Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE TALKING SPARROW MURDERS Darwin L. Teilhet (Morrow: \$2.)	chirps "I'm caught!", old		Kolossal!
OUT WENT THE TAPER R. C. Ashby (Macmillan: \$2.)	ruin, ditto house, be- lievable ghost, and in-	on hottest night (by author of "It Walks by	Br-r-r!
THE STREET OF THE SERPENTS Francis Beeding (Harpers: \$2.)	Three men and a girl form syndicate to hunt treasure in Alhambra, running afoul murder- ous Mr. Abdullah.		Exciting
SYNTHETIC GENTLEMAN Channing Pollock (Farrar & Rinehart: \$2.)	uppers stumbles on Long Island beauty, im- personates rich boy ac-	tective fans relish, but it's all very breezy and readable, with good	Amusing
MR. PIDGEON'S ISLAND Anthony Berkeley (Crime Club: \$2)	Mr. Pidgeon, eccentric legatee, invites explo- sive assortment of guests on yachting party with malice afore- thought. Roger Sher- ingham goes along.	less interested in sordid	Swell

"Difficult to over-estimate its importance. His authority is unquestionable, his knowledge encyclopaedic. A very remarkable book"—The Spectator (London) 11

## TWILIGHT IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY

#### By Sir Reginald Johnston

Extraordinary inside picture of the fate of the Manchu dynasty in China and events leading up to Manchukuo, by the former tutor of P'u-yi. Foreword by the Emperor of Manchukuo. Illustrated. \$5.00.

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#### By Louis Bertrand and Sir Charles Petrie

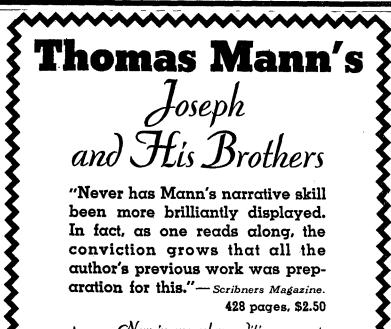
A forceful, vividly written history, colorful in narrative and unified in theme, dealing with the Moorish occupation, the conquest of the new world, and the complete history of the Monarchy. A well balanced work for student, traveler, and general reader by two outstanding writers. \$4.00.

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BUDDEN	BROOKS	•		•	760	Pages	•	•	\$3.00

**ALFRED A. KNOPF** 

PUBLISHER, N.Y.

### JOHN ANISFIELD AWARD

The Saturday Review has the honor to announce a prize of \$1,000 established by Mrs. Edith Anisfield Wolf of Cleveland, Ohio, in memory of her father, to be called the John Anisfield Award. The prize will be awarded annually after August first of each year, to a sound and significant book published in the previous twelve months on the subject of racial relations in the contemporary world. The prize will be administered by a committee of judges consisting of Henry Seidel Canby, Editor of *The Saturday Review* of Literature, Henry Pratt Fairchild, Professor of Sociology in New York University, and Donald Young of the Social Science Research Council. Books submitted for the award may be sent to the Anisfield Award Committee, care of *The Saturday Review*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City. The first award will be made to a book published between August 1, 1934, and August 1, 1935.



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## Reviewing THE REVIEW

At this time every year, the Circulation Department is in a cheerful mood, to say the least. July is *The Saturday Review's* big month for renewals, and this has been a big July. Our desk is piled high with subscriptions, and with many of them has come some pleasant comment. To give you an idea...

#### Didn't Miss a Copy, Even in Europe

"Were it not so hot I could write a very, very long letter telling you of all the things that I like in *The Saturday Review*. Briefly, however, I would say that even during my recent year abroad I did not miss a single copy, and that, by and large, I read it through each week from front to back—including advertisements and personals." B. E., New York City.

#### A Stimulating Pleasure

"I am enclosing check for renewal of my own subscription and for a year's subscription for a friend who greatly enjoys the Double-Crostics. Besides those, which I find a stimulating pleasure in my eighty-fourth year, I like most Dr. Canby's editorials, The Bowling Green, the reviews." E. B. S., West Roxbury, Mass.

#### **Remails Her Copy**

"Mrs. Wharton's and Mr. Tomlinson's articles seem to me of real value; and Mr. Canby's editorials carry on the very best traditions of literary criticism. I send the Review to a friend every Christmas time, by subscription, and my own copy is clipped and remailed, very often." J. R. A., Minneapolis, Minn.

#### Looking Forward to Two More Years

"I get so much pleasure out of *The* Saturday Review, that I am glad to look forward to two more years of it. I am getting much joy out of the Double-Crostics." *E. B. H.*, *Toledo*, Ohio.

#### Almost Indispensable

"Herewith you will find my twoyear renewal check. I cannot live comfortably without the Review. My personal comment is that I like Dr. Canby's editorials for their pungency and penetration. . . . Most of the general essays and reviews are to my taste. The magazine is almost indispensable to me." C. E. H., St. Louis, Mo.

#### A Guide for Both Personal and Library Buying

"My chief interest in *The Saturday Review* is in the estimates of new books that are published. They guide me in my own purchases and in my recommendations for the college library. These reviews are my most valuable source of information as to what is going on in the field of literature." W. S. G., De Land, Florida.

## **Double-Crostics:** Number 17

#### By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

#### DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-one 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 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

Either before (preferably) or after placing the letters in their squares you should write the words you have guessed on the

DEFINITIONS	WORDS
I. 22-10-98-105-91-119-79. Foolishly sentimental.	
II. 61-87-34-6-103-67-121-55. A Homeric hero.	~
III. 90-48-68. Yellow-flowered, medicinal plant.	
IV. 94-113-32. Solution of sodium hydroxide.	
V. 56-49-73-115. A European capi- tal.	
VI. 1-35-84-78-16-52. Carried light- ly.	
VII. 60-116-111-27-95-46-80. Agree- able quality of sound.	
VIII. 88-101-45-76-7-3-72-65. Valu- able family possession.	~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
IX. 54-96-15-47-122-70. Given in response to applause.	
X. 43-89-102-85. Rupture or schism.	
XI. 86-24-107-13-58-33-31. To ex- ceed in duration.	
XII. 17-4-75-38-118. To cast down in estimation.	
XIII. 51-28-110-39-23-104-81. Re- tributive justice.	
XIV. 8-97-14-112-125-83-74-92-124. Immortal.	
XV. 37-41-100-18-117. Depicts, ex- presses.	~
XVI. 109-11-64-59-21-120-114.Com- position for a monument.	
XVII. 50-9-25-62-108-19-40-36. Pale flower of Hades.	~
XVIII. 77-30-63-12-57. Quality of Ichabod Crane's voice.	
XIX. 53-99-5-29-69. Soft uncooked paste.	~

XX. 106-66-123-26-93-82-42. Appellative.

XXI. 20-44-2-71. German bone of French contention.

#### The New Books

(Continued from preceding page)

chalance of Sara Hurst; the heartbreaks of Helen Kent, who brought up the child Honey only to lose her to her mother's tender mercies; the devastating effect of Sara on every man she met; the ruined life of her first husband; her impossible mother; the stoic Kent grande-dame; the absorption of Helen Kent herself—not one of those characters moves a human muscle; not one of these situations emerges from a condition of complete stasis. A motion-picture could be made from "Duck's Back" that would be a sounder piece of work than its original. A. C. B.

BESSIE COTTER. By Wallace Smith. Covici-Friede. 1934. \$2.

#### CHILDREN OF THE POOR. Anonymous. Vanguard. 1934. \$2.50.

It should be amply evident, after a reading of these two books, that a social conscience alone will not make for a good novel. Both products of disillusionment and cynicism, both directly involved with the results of economic determinism, one is the work of a clever artist and will provide hilarious entertainment despite its sordid subject-matter, the other is the work of an earnest moralist and will move the reader to indignation, despite the clumsiness of its presentation. Somewhere between the two lies the truth, in so far as it is ascertainable.

Mr. Smith's novel harks back to the days when Chicago was a wide-open town and the great war on "white slavery" was in full progress. The action of his story takes place entirely within the walls of a parlor-house of the two-dollar variety. In a swift prose-style, the author introduces rare character after character, novel situation after novel situation, rapidly establishing an atmosphere authentic in detail and mood. There is no condemnation in "Bessie Cotter," no crusading, no sign of criticism. So thoroughgoing is the author's cynical amusement that he can convulse the reader; he has written a gay book and a funny one but one that never plumbs the depths of the human problem it has stated.

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.

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#### SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (NUMBER 16) GAY—"THE BEGGAR'S OPERA"

Let us drink and sport today, Ours is not tomorrow. Love with youth flies swift away, Age is naught but sorrow. Dance and sing, Time's on the wing, Life never knows the return of spring.

> wood. As a matter of fact, railways play a negligible role in Haitian transportation, and probably always will. Coffee, the main crop, still comes down from the hills on donkey-back and peasants' heads; and the tangle of mountains of which the country is made up, plus native habits, plus the convenience and economy of motor-trucks when rapid, heavy transportation is really demanded, make the steam railroad a comparatively obsolete device here as in many similar tropical mountain neighborhoods.

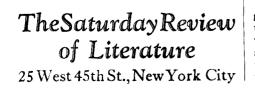
#### Juvenile

#### DAVY CROCKETT. By Constance Rourke. Harcourt, Brace. 1934. \$2.50.

Miss Rourke must have had a lot of fun collecting legends about Davy Crockett; so much fun that she apparently forgot the man in his bibliography. He doesn't appear in this book. There are stories about him, and a vague chronology, and plenty of stories he is said to have told. His language rings true; the whole book rings true enough; but it lacks the touch of life. One can't believe that there wasn't a Davy Crockett who was a human being as well as a hunter, with special qualities of his own, instead of a lay figure who might be any one of a hundred early Western pioneers, if his name and a few biographical and geographical details were changed.

There is a wild turkey gobbler with flesh and blood; and a pale sharper whose game was thimblerig has some, too. Otherwise the book is full of shadows. The jacket flap says rather incidentally that it was written for young readers. It won't satisfy any little dear who has felt that marvellous and mysterious click with which Peter Rabbit comes to life; early Tennessee and Texas are not nearly as real here as Beatrix Potter made Farmer McGregor's garden!

And as long as we are on the subject—*The Saturday Review* costs \$3.50 for one year in the United States and Pan-American Postal Union; \$5.00 in Canada; 18 shillings in Great Britain; and \$4.50 elsewhere. Why not become a regular subscriber? The address is below.



The anonymous author of the autobiographical "Children of the Poor" also introduces a prostitute—his sister; and we wonder what she would have said to Bessie Cotter's remark: "it ain't low wages" that drives girls into prostitution. "A girl that would go down the line for a living sound enough, on the whole, if trite and colorless, and not infrequently marred by loose generalizations, of no great significance, but just inaccurate enough to mislead those unacquainted with the facts and to exasperate those who are. On page 174, in speaking of the material benefits generally conferred by our interventions in the Caribbean on the countries concerned, he states, for example, that "in Haiti, roads and railroads were built connecting the principal cities."

would go down the line, regardless. And them that won't--won't." Reared in the

most abject poverty, feeding on left-over

scraps their mother managed to bring

home, dressed in cast-off clothes, consist-

ently half-starved and despised for their

degradation, Rose Porcello went on the streets at ten, was a regular visitor at a

Chinese den in New Zealand before she

was eleven; her brother, the author of this

book, took the only line open to him since

he was not a girl-he was a thief. He is

bitter, and well he might be; his bitterness

frequently carries him to sentimental ex-

tremes of exposition and commentary, but

the solidity of his accomplishment remains. He has not written a fine autobiog-

raphy, though he has written a moving

one. It is a document of the gutter that

will stand with other such documents

when, if ever, the gutter that is the in-

evitable concomitant of inordinate af-

fluence, shall have disappeared for ever.

International

THE TWO AMERICAS. By Stephen Dug-

Dr. Duggan discusses the contrasting

backgrounds of the Latin American re-

publics and the United States; their pres-

ent-day differences, social, political, eco-

nomic; the Monroe Doctrine, interven-

tions in the Caribbean, relations with the

League of Nations, Pan-Americanism,

misunderstandings on both sides, and

their possible remedies. His exposition is

gan. Scribners. 1934. \$1.75.

The statement about railroads is not only wrong in fact but worse in connotation, calling up as it does in the casual American reader's mind a vague picture based on what railroads have done in the past in opening up his own country. Such railways as there are in Haiti were, with the exception of a Little arm running up from St. Marc to the village of Virrette, built before intervention. They consist of a little-used line between St. Marc and Port au Prince, and a short bit from Cape Haitien to Bahon, mainly used for logE. N. S.

#### Miscellaneous

AMERICAN PLAYS PRINTED 1714-1830. A Bibliographical Record. Compiled by Frank Pierce Hill. Stanford University Press. 1934. \$3.50.

Bibliographies are coming fast out of the West! The latest is a very interesting little check list of 347 American plays printed from 1714 to 1830. It is based on the second edition of "Early American Plays" published by Oscar Wegelin in 1905 and the annotated manuscript catalogue of Dr. Fred W. Atkinson's great collection