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The New Books

Fiction

THE GORGEOUS HUSSY. By Samuel Hopkins Adams. Houghton Mifflin. 1934. \$2.50.

The entertainment value of this historical novel is high. Easy to read, amusing, and informative, it affectionately illuminates the city of Washington during the age of Jackson. Mr. Adams has the deft touch in his political writing, an ironic urbanity that delights in showing how intrigue and conniving, through the interplay of personalities, make history. In "Revelry," eight years ago, he was bitter; here in "The Gorgeous Hussy" he is tolerant and occupied with the picturesque. This is not to say that politics are to him more lovely than when he ended that rousing first chapter of "Revelry," but these Jacksonian absurdities are distant, they have the seductiveness of "the good old days." And most potent of all mellowing influences, Mr. Adams is in love with his hussy.

Through the first two-thirds of the story, Peggy O'Neale is the conquering beauty, bowling over social obstacles by the force of ebullient charm, and becoming at the end of this period a veritable Alger heroine—from tavern wench to political power supreme. The triumphal march goes through the first forty years of her life, and cheering her on are Mr. Adams's eminently satisfying (to the laymen of historical research) portraits: the Jacksons—Uncle Andy and his ill-starred "Rawchel," Daniel Webster, Clay, Van Buren, Calhoun, and a dozen others. By most readers, these shadows of great men will be immediately identified with the men themselves. Only when Mr. Adams forces the draught of his invention, and gives us mere snippets that he labels E. A. Poe, or Audubon, or Lincoln (in the last pages), do we feel that he is indiscreet. These sins are small, however, in contrast with the strength in his major characters and the verisimilitude of his larger portraits. As a whole, the book is definitely worth the reading. R. B. M.

THE LONG WHIP. By Eugene Campbell. Scribners. 1934. \$2.

"The more I see of human nature, the more I always marvel at human presumptions," the old family lawyer said at Frederick Fortescu's death. Yet even he for all his glib prophecies of the family's future, could not foresee to what limits presumption would go. Old Fortescu had come from England a poor, obscure blacksmith, embittered by the thrashing given him by a young lord squire and M. F. H. He died worth millions in America, leaving behind him a coach and four with the Fortescu arms upon it, and a portrait of himself in full hunting regalia though he'd never ridden to hounds in his life. The third generation found Blair, dominant heir, all his grandfather could have desired, with estates in Virginia, Newport, and New York. In him Mr. Campbell has drawn a full-length portrait, done with sharpness, directness and telling simplicity, of a man possessed by his money and veneration for family.

The plot of the story woven about him is complex, and overlaid with incident, but the novel has vitality and is more arresting than most tales of the *beau monde*. E. L. V. A.

BASSETT. By Stella Gibbons. Longmans, Green. 1934. \$2.

One of the characters of this story is a very charming young man who always breaks off the important events of his life before they reach their climax. Miss Gibbons does the same thing with her novel. Such excellent characterizations as she accomplishes cry out for more development than they get; the author is content to use them only as material for sharp, but static, satire. As humor, "Basset" is highly enjoyable; it has delicious moments, and considerable penetration. As a novel, it is a very ramshackle affair, telling two stories which have no connection with each other except that of geographical proximity. One story, and the better one, is that of two old maids who, much to their surprise, manage to make a success of a country boarding-house. The other, more ordinary, is the story of the rich family next door, whose younger members are too self-satisfied to bring off a love affair. Although the two milieus suggest obvious contrasts, the stories do not merge. "Basset" is readable and amusing, but it is not another "Cold Comfort Farm." G. S.

Miscellaneous

YOU MUST RELAX. By Edmund Jacobson. Whittlesey. 1934. \$1.50.

Relaxing is no elusive subjective demon to Dr. Jacobson. Neither is it something pleasant to indulge in for its own sweet sake. We are a nervous nation, with nerve strain rampant, and it will take scientific relaxation to bring normalcy to nerves, to relieve the insomniac, and help those troubled with colitis, indigestion, and high blood pressure.

Some highly interesting work that promises much has been done by Dr. Jacobson, and this book is a popular account of the objective acquirement of what he calls progressive relaxation. First we must train our sense to note the dull signals from the muscle sense in contracted muscles, and then relax and relax them until the last remnant of muscle sense has gone. We must become skilled at this with our arms in the beginning, then extend it to legs, torso, and even to the eye sockets. The relaxation finally achieved, after a year or so of this attention, exceeds that even of the unscientifically trained mystic, as electrical measurements show. Once this skill is acquired we can relax while

at work all the muscle groups except those needed to push the pen or direct customers. The two dozen photographs in the book should help reach this goal. If one does not care to be frightened into relaxing, then he may skip the sections dealing with neurotic America and start relaxing at the fifth chapter.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Jacobson did not relax while he wrote this book, for it bears the earmarks of a professor laboring to be elementary. Let it be hoped that its jerkiness and recurrent condescension will not prejudice the reader against the real worth of teaching progressive relaxation.

D. A. L.

Latest Books Received

ART

The Art of the Greeks. H. B. Walters. Macmillan. \$6.50.

INTERNATIONAL

Democracy and Nazi-ism. G. G. Fox. Chicago: Argus. 75 cents.

PAMPHLETS

Outline Maps. Bloomington, Ill.: McKnight. **The Old English Newspaper.** Mrs. H. Richardson. Oxford Univ. Pr. 80 cents. **Trailside Transformation.** W. H. Carr. American Museum of Natural History. **Thoughts: Religious and Philosophic.** A. E. Grimshaw, Jr. Hawthorne, N. J.: The Author. 75 cents.

TRAVEL

Finding the Worth While in the Orient. L. S. Kirtland. McBride. \$3.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE THIRD OWL Robert T. Casey (Bobbs-Merrill: \$2.)	Head of run-to-seed rich family found dead beneath antique owl with evil history. Jim Sands starts deducing.	Not the best of the Sands opera, but failings as mystery are re-deemed by spooky atmosphere.	Diverting
MURDER OFF KEY Kathleen Sproul (Dutton: \$2.)	Much-loved wife of famous 'cellist found poisoned in sanitarium. Numerous lovers are suspect. Dick Wilson picks killer.	Though yarn becomes confused at times and outcome is slightly disappointing, suspense holds up satisfactorily.	60-40
KHARDUNI Andrew Soutar (Macaulay: \$2.)	Omniscient Mr. Kharduni confounds Cruxton of Secret Service with queer gadgets and saves nice young man from dungeon cell.	Television, telepathy, and other scientific wonders fail to bolster up talkative and unduly melodramatic yarn.	No go
THE CLUTCHING HAND Arthur B. Reeve (Reilly & Lee: \$2.)	Craig Kennedy and his cock-eyed science foil criminal who kills and drugs and robs ad lib.	Mystery stories have gone a long way since Craig Kennedy appeared, but that gent changeth not.	Silly
THE PUZZLE OF THE SILVER PERSIAN Stuart Palmer (Crime Club: \$2)	Assorted murders on shipboard and in England with Hildegard Withers very much on the job.	Well-plotted story leads wry detective, shipmates, readers fear-haunted chase through London and ancestral castle.	Very good

"I recommend this novel as a tonic, and prescribe it for those whose minds are full of alarms—especially married people." —Harry Hansen.

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by Phyllis Bottome

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WITHIN THIS PRESENT

by Margaret Ayer Barnes

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

\$2.50

The PHOENIX NEST

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

I HAVEN'T seen Archie MacLeish's contribution to the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, in the shape of a libretto on the building of the Union Pacific Railway. But I think that is a corking idea for a ballet. I was looking over *Dunbar's* "History of Travel in America" the other night, and it contains a gorgeous old photograph of the driving of the last spike and the climactic hour in which the two locomotives met head on, and those on board each respective cowcatcher proffered bottles of beer—or was it champagne?—to each other. . . . Mr. Canby confirms my belief that the episode lends itself to the theatre. He has seen the ballet and says: "It's rough, tough, rhythmic, and very funny. Massine (the barkeep) has the best humorous dance of this or many seasons. His Russian idea of an Irishman doing a negro dance works out into something more French than France . . . It was champagne. I saw the bottles." . . . *Guy Holt's* death still seems unbelievable to me, his was so vital a personality. One of the most intelligent and charming of men, with a quick, delightful wit and a mind of striking originality, he is one of the men who represented the best in literature and in publishing. There was always a kind of gallantry about Guy. He so thoroughly enjoyed life that his removal from it is just one of those things it is particularly difficult to understand. There are far too few such people. Most of us are very dull and deadly by comparison . . . Perhaps part of it was that Guy's parents were of the theatre, and theatrical life develops some of the best sports in the world . . . But Guy also possessed an instinctively fine literary taste. The uproar of modern publishing didn't fool him a bit. He knew what was what. I salute him in passing. He was an "ace" . . . I wonder why columnists are beginning to bore me? Perhaps because I have reached the age when I am beginning to bore myself. But I was thinking it over this morning. How long they have all been dishing up the same kind of small talk concerning the same old set of celebrities. It is not to be wondered at, in a way. The wonder is that most columnists don't crack under the strain well within a decade. To keep abreast of gossip year after year, and to sleuth the topical day after day, and always to be humorous—what an infernal job! . . . I have a real respect for the veterans, because I know, if only slightly, how onerous such a job can be. . . . But I keep wondering about the same old set of celebrities. Probably because it's Spring and I'm restless. But how long we have been hearing anecdotes of just certain people. It's like the magazine covers. Month after month they parade the same—or about the same, list of "big names." One reads the stories attached to these names, and in nine cases out of ten they are just another set of stories in the same vein by people with whose work one was thoroughly familiar back in 1906. Thoroughly familiar, I say advisedly, because none of them have anything any more than their old routine. They have never learned a new set of steps. . . . Isn't it (without wishing to lose my own little job or wishing any of the big-shot columnists to lose theirs) about time that some of the younger people developed a few columnists to tell us what the younger white hopes are up to? The veterans aren't in touch with the promising young people. There was a day when even such storied names as *Dreiser* and *Fannie Hurst* and *Edna Ferber* and *George S. Kaufman* were of no particular importance. There was a day, for instance, in *F. P. A.'s* column when "*Smeed*" and "*G. S. K.*" were "contribs"—which means *Deems Taylor* and *Kaufman*; long before fame had laurelled them. Where is the column today that is publishing early squibs or verses by, or talking about, those boys and girls who will be Big Names tomorrow? . . . Several things have contributed to this mood of mine. One was seeing a *revue* called "New Faces"—prominent in which, both in the writing of certain numbers and in the acting, was a youngster named *Nancy Hamilton*. To me her work was delightful. I'd never heard anything about her before. Probably if I were as speakeasy-conscious as I used to be, or got around at all now to those resorts which have taken the place of the old "speaks"—it seems so long ago now, doesn't it, that we had Prohibition?—I

should have heard comment upon her promise. But so far as my informants of the press go (I mean, from reading them), I wouldn't have known anything. Then last night I was sitting up finishing advance galley of a new novel by that very funny singer of the "dear old songs," *Eleanor Shaler*. She has a reputation now as a comedienne, and in her odd moments she has tossed off a young novel (*Morrow*), chiefly concerned with show business, that has verve and authenticity. There must be plenty in New York trying to make their way into the kingdom of letters. But even the younger people I know are not exactly the youngest now. And where are hidden away the future *Marc Connellys*, "*Red*" *Lewis*, *Ferbers*, *Hursts*, *Dreisers*, *Booth Tarkingtons*, and *Irvin Cobbs*? . . . I am naming popular names purposely. Certainly the Big Names of today aren't going on forever. Another crop must be in process of growth. The attitude of the average magazine editor is to feed the public the same Big Names year in and year out, their idea presumably being that the public doesn't want to read anyone else and that only those names will keep the circulation up to a figure that will still please the publishers and allow them to commute to Palm Beach and the Riviera. . . . If you ask me, I think that is all a lot of boloney; and I think that most of us who are supposed to follow the literary "scene" are asleep at the switch. . . . It may be that the literary agents know more about what is really going on in contemporary writing than most of the publishers and most of the editors. Occasionally you get a publisher like *Harrison Smith* who possesses that excited, ferreting curiosity concerning new writers that every publisher should possess, and "gets around" incredibly much. . . . Anyway, I had to get this all off my chest. . . . *Fulton Oursler* is, queerly enough it has always seemed to me, editor of *Liberty*. I cannot connect the man with the magazine at all, somehow. At all events, he is a pretty good novelist, as you know, but he hasn't had time to write a new one for four years. Now he expects to have a new book for Covici, Friede for Fall publication. They say that as yet no satisfactory title has been found for it. . . . *Dan Totheroh's* play about the *Brontës*, "*Moor Born*," seems to me the best play about famous literary characters since "*The Barretts of Wimpole Street*." Moreover, I greatly admired the acting of the cast, particularly that of *Miss Gahagan* and of *Mr. Glenn Anders*. The play was so thoroughly satisfying to me, in the mounting, in the direction, and above all in the skilled dramatic writing and the rare integrity of *Mr. Totheroh's* script, that I left the theatre feeling greatly inspired. All *Saturday Review* subscribers should be sure to see it! . . . And what a job to make a play about the *Brontës*! Even *Clemence Dane*, whom I so much admire for "*Come of Age*," didn't seem to me to succeed in "*Wild Decembers*," which I have read in book-form. . . . *Edna St. Vincent Millay* will be back in this country by the time you read this, and will doubtless have delivered to her publishers the manuscript of her new book of poems, "*Epitaph on the Race of Man*," for Fall publication. She will also do a preface for a book that Harper's Juvenile Department will publish, "*A Day on Skates*," by *Hilda Van Stockum*. *Miss Van Stockum* is *Miss Millay's* niece. . . . From St. Lucia, British West Indies, have come various rhymed missives ever and anon from *Frances Frost*, who has been wintering there with her husband, *Samuel Gaillard Stoney*. *Frances's* rhymed letters are superbly amusing, illustrating her profound sense of humor. But she is also a grave New Englander, as those who have been fortunate enough to read her books of short poems and her latest and finest poem, "*Woman of This Earth*," will have recognized. So she is now in Cambridge, Massachusetts. *Miss Frost* is one of the younger women poets who has forged steadily ahead in her work, and her last book is a particularly beautiful creation. . . . *Walter Lippmann's* "*The Method of Freedom*" will be out late this month. *Macmillan* is the publisher. *Mr. Lippmann* thinks that the essentials of free government are more seriously challenged now than at any time since the American colonies declared their independence.

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"Welcome (this as) a really good novel, frank, brutal, coarse,

but not for the sake of coarseness, intensely human, and to be read with mounting pleasure and interest."—Henry Seidel Canby in *The Saturday Review of Literature*.

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and full-bodied. There is spaciousness in this story, and a sure handling of plot, character, and situations."—Stanley Went in *The Saturday Review of Literature*.

"It is impossible to resist those families of his, whether their street be called *Magnolia* or *Oleander*. His is a fine and unusual gift."—Book Society News, London. \$2.50

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"It is keen, fast-moving, bawdy, philosophical, irresponsible, delightful hooley. No one but Aldous Huxley has packed so much intellectual dynamite, sensuous poetry, japes, diatribes, pleasing pseudo-philosophy, parodies and fourth-dimensional horseplay into one novel since the novel went prissy."—Chicago News.

"One of the grandest books I've read in a long time. I couldn't put it down. Such a mixture of roaring humor, beastliness, and constant excitement. It is charged with electricity."—Marcia Passage of *The Sunwise Turn Bookshop*. \$2.50

FINNLEY WREN

The new novel by
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author of *HEAVY LADEN*

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