

The AMEN CORNER

"Thought shall be the harder,
Heart the keener,
Mood shall be the more,
As our might lessens."—

THE LAY OF THE BATTLE OF MALDON.

These lines on the title-page of *A Study of History*, by Arnold J. Toynbee, the first three volumes of which the Oxford University Press has already published ("It is clear from these first volumes," says the *Christian Science Monitor*, "that the work is of major importance."), might serve equally well for that most exciting book *These Hurling Years*, An Historical Outline 1900-1933, by Gerald Heard, which we have read and re-read several times with undiminished interest since an advance copy first came our way. The Oxford Press has just brought it out this week.

Its theme is "the increasing consciousness of the human mind, increasing consciousness of a new revolutionary knowledge of what outer nature actually is, what the mind's own nature is, and of the mysterious relationship between them. In our generation that upheaval has reached the threshold . . . We are seeing the first fine cracks that show where the earth is about to split open." As he watches the old era breaking up, the new era dawning, Gerald Heard etches vivid portraits of individuals, summarizes brilliantly remarkable books, goes to the heart of movements in art, appraises the significance of new discoveries, traces world events from the death of Queen Victoria to the launching of Roosevelt's New Deal.

We understand why Harold Nicolson calls it "one of the most illuminating, suggestive and dynamic volumes that I have read within the last twenty years," and David Garnett says: "It is a fascinatingly interesting book which I cannot too strongly recommend. It has tremendous value." If you are at all interested in the world today—and who is not?—it is, in the Oxonian's opinion, a book you must read.

In our enthusiasm we mustn't forget to mention another book published on the same day, *The Technique of Painting*, by Hilaire Hiler.³ It is a kind of painter's "cook book." The author reviews all methods of painting and gives most practical instruction in materials, tools, and processes, most wittily expressed. Sir William Rothenstein, who writes the Preface to the book, thinks it "the best written in recent years" on the subject.

The Oxonian started out to review the new *Oxford Fall List* for 1934 which lies on his desk. But it begins with *These Hurling Years*, which has swept us off our feet. As all who know the productions of the Oxford Press will readily guess, however, the List is full of interest for the book-lover all the way through. You had better write for a copy and peruse it yourself. It is sent quite free of charge.

The next thing to look for, by the way, is the new cheap edition⁴ of T. E. Shaw (Lawrence of Arabia)'s *Odyssey* scheduled for the 13th. Like the original edition, it is a very beautiful book, though quite different in binding, etc. The jacket is one of those one would like to frame.

THE OXONIAN.

(¹) 3 vols. \$17.50. (²) 114 Fifth Avenue.
(³) \$3.00. (⁴) Author of *Some People in the World's Classics*. 80c. Send for complete list.
(⁵) \$3.75. (⁶) \$1.75.

It Won't Come Home to Roost!

You will want to have more than one copy of the Tenth Anniversary Number of *The Saturday Review* which is coming on October 6th. Once borrowed or stolen, your copy will probably not be returned. And why incite your literary friends to larceny when additional copies may be ordered at ten cents apiece from the Circulation Dept. of *The Saturday Review* at 25 West 45th St., New York City?

The PHOENIX NEST

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

AN ALBLABOOK

THE above strikes me as a queer title, but "Alblabooks" is the general name given to a series of new and cheaper editions of good books issued by Alfred A. Knopf. They are books that have proved of permanent interest; and they are issued in a handsome uniform binding designed by my favorite W. A. Dwiggins. Among them are André Gide's "Travels in the Congo," and Maurice Barling's "In My End Is My Beginning." But what chiefly interests me is that Genevieve Taggard's "The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson" is now available in this series. The Alblabooks cost two fifty apiece; but for a little more than you pay for the average novel you can now procure in Miss Taggard's book a lovely and subtle biography of our greatest American woman poet of the past. The story therein is unique, and so better than nine-tenths of the fiction you are likely to read; and *Emily Dickinson* has been approached by a finely poetic and critical mind of a high order of integrity. If you haven't read the book before and don't get it now, you are certainly missing something.

AN OXONIAN ON POETRY

This is to note that the Oxford Lectures on Poetry by E. de Selincourt, Honorary Fellow of University College and formerly Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford, are now available from the Clarendon Press at Oxford, published in this country by the Oxford University Press at \$3.75. I shall comment further upon this book later on. The last two lectures are upon the late Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, one whose works have already become part of the great poetry of the world. At his best Bridges was very fine, with an equipment and execution superior to the great majority of poets of our day. I think that his reputation will grow rather than diminish within the next quarter century.

THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

During an illness, *Edith Sitwell* chose her first series of extracts for "The Pleasures of Poetry" from Milton and the poets of the Augustan Age. There are now three series, the second being a selection from the poets of the Romantic Revival, the third from those of the Victorian Era. Each book has a sizable introduction, and the three are now published in this country by W. W. Norton & Company at two dollars each in a single format. Naturally Miss Sitwell's selections are idiosyncratic. She says she had no settled plan in compiling the books, merely gathering together those particular poems that most pleased her. Her prosodic analyses tend to become a little wearisome in her introductions. But she is never in the slightest doubt concerning the rightness of her opinions, and this gives definition and zest to her approach. The books are stimulating because they arouse one's own predilections to assert themselves, and there are enough fine poems included to remind us of others as fine apparently on the index expurgatorius. Milton, Herrick, Marvell, Dryden, Pope, and Smart fill the first book. The astonishing thing about the inclusions from Milton is that there is nothing from "Samson Agonistes," while a trivial song from "Arcades" gains a place. I am glad, however, to have the hymn to light from "Paradise Lost" and all of "Lycidas." Herrick was a very pretty poet, and enough of him is here. Marvell was almost a great one, and here, among others, is his greatest, "To His Coy Mistress." Dryden's "Alexander's Feast" is an amazing feat, and it is included. And if Pope's "Dunciad" delights you more than it does me, you can have your fill of it in these pages. Smart's "A Song of David" is, of course, a masterpiece after its kind; and I like what Miss Sitwell says about Smart.

In the second volume we have Blake, Shelley (not particularly well represented), Keats (astonishing that Miss Sitwell can include two sonnets such as "After Dark Vapors" and "On The Sea" and leave out "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and the last sonnet—apparently it is done because the other two have been so much anthologized). Yet there are such inferior lines in the two sonnets she includes that they hardly do Keats justice. Also several of the Odes surpass the "Hymn to Pan," Coleridge (omitting "Christabel"), Wordsworth, Byron, Moore,

and Darley. I could have dispensed with much Moore, and had more Darley; and what of Darley's contemporary Thomas Lovell Beddoes? Beddoes just missed greatness and makes Moore's poetry look like the treacle that most of it is. The third volume is strange. Browning just gets in last, by the skin of his teeth, with "In a Year," one of his comparatively inferior poems, while Omar Khayyám, without Fitzgerald's name, opens the book. Everyone knows that Fitzgerald made a loose paraphrase into great poetry. The credit for the "Rubáiyát" in English belongs to the English poet, not to the Persian tent-maker. Miss Sitwell makes much of Swinburne's "Illicit." He wrote so many better poems, notably "Hertha" and "Super Flumina Babylonis," that one marvels at her closeted detachment from the heart-beat of great poetry. I admire both Rossetti and Morris, but when Browning is excluded as not truly representative of the Victorian era it seems to me that the preponderance of their poems here throws a strange light on the picture. Browning was of his time just as much as was Tennyson. Poe pops up as a Victorian; but how anyone can fail to see that "The Haunted Palace" is far superior to the rather silly "Annabel Lee" and the rather negligible "Romance," I, for one, cannot explain. But "To Helen" was perhaps Poe's most perfect poem, and is here. So is Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," a masterpiece she never approached thereafter. The volumes are worth buying and possessing, Miss Sitwell being one of the most interesting poets of our time.

THE WESTWARD STAR

His publishers tell me that Frank Ernest Hill has now delivered the manuscript of his long poem, "The Westward Star." It should prove to be a vital American narrative. He has written a novel in verse and has evolved a verse form that he thinks avoids the monotony of much blank verse and also the abrupt changes from one form to another. "I wanted," he says, "to show people going west as they really were. This meant, for instance, showing that many of them did it out of desperation, etc. etc." I shall look for this new book with interest.

Isidor Schneider is leaving the Macaulay Company to complete the novel he has been working on during the past year. He will continue with the shop group in the Macaulay Company as a representative of the Literary Trades Section of the Office Workers Union.

PERSONALS

ADVERTISEMENTS will be accepted in this column for things wanted or unwanted; personal services to let or required; literary or publishing offers not easily classified elsewhere; miscellaneous items appealing to a select and intelligent clientele; exchange and barter of literary property or literary services; jobs wanted, houses or camps for rent, tutoring, travelling companions, ideas for sale; communications of a decorous nature; expressions of opinion (limited to fifty lines). All advertisements must be consonant with the purposes and character of *The Saturday Review*. Rates: 7 cents per word, including signature. Count two additional words for Box and Number. Address Personal Dept., *Saturday Review*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.

STUDIO—Some intelligent person is offered an opportunity to reasonably rent or share a well-lighted studio in central Manhattan, having large rooms, private elevator, and beautiful furnishings, including a Steinway concert grand. If adjectives had a real meaning any more, this would be a "perfect" studio for a successful artist, musician, or cultured individual. Box 898.

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LONGMANS

PERSONALS

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PASSION (in the classical sense) prompts purveyor of literary pills to purge melancholy to address to literate and solvent readers of the *Saturday Review* the following passionate plea: Why be lonely? You, too, can be an after-dinner talker. You, too, can shine in the social firmament. Let me tell you what to read and where to get what to read. Address North Waller, c/o The Argus Book Shop, 333 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Illinois.

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SEMPER PAEDICULI. In "Marlowe in London," Eccles praises Hotson. Hotson praises Eccles. Tucker Brooke praises both. Brooke writes: "Eccles gives us for the first time clear facts about the poet's residence in London during the period he was writing his greatest plays." I dissent. If Tucker Brooke will show me where Eccles proves that his protagonist wrote Tamburlane, or Dr. Faustus, I will donate \$100.00 to any charity Brooke selects. George Frisbee.

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Odd Volumes

TO the collector, and even more to the bookseller, a broken set is cause for more acute distress than is a broken leg. The leg has a chance to mend, the set none at all. Every bookman has heard marvellous stories of sets being matched by a succession of coincidences that would shame the wood-pulp school of fiction—of a Volume One in Bangor and a Volume Two in Butte which contrive to reunite in Peoria or Peru. But the stories are never confirmable.

Any discussion of the odd volume, then, must be based on the hypothesis (in which there is no element of the hypothetical) that an odd volume never finds its true mate—the companion with which it set out on the ruinous journey that was to spell disaster to one and therefore to both. Is it, then, reasonable, ethical, sentimentally sound to match a Volume One to a Volume Two to which it has obviously never before been joined in wedlock? The fact of mismatching is almost always glaringly patent even to the non-technical eye; a matched set of a Cooper novel, of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," fairly screams its unhallowed status. No two sets of units undergo an identical sequence of experiences, are confronted by a parallel group of physical phenomena. Perhaps no two of us even hold a book exactly alike, and the structure of the book, though the book may conceivably remain a fine copy, will somehow not only accommodate itself to the manner in which it is held, but will make manifest the way in which it accommodates itself—certainly to the extent that two copies of the same edition, or two volumes of a set, will disclose distinctions of custodianship to the alert collector.

Now it was, of course, sheer chance that first brought a given Volume One and a given Volume Two together in the first place. Up to the original casual juxtaposition in bindery or stockroom neither was definitively destined for the other, any more than a specified gathering of sheets is ever preordained to constitute a single volume. The latter condition, indeed, has produced many familiar bibliographical puzzles of a superior order.

Once the set has gone out into the world, however, it is technically as indissoluble as a single volume. Thereafter any rearrangement of its component parts becomes as egregious a bit of tampering as the substitution of a signature from another volume. The substitution or insertion of a signature or a page is in most cases frowned upon by the cognoscenti, and properly, yet the grafting of wanting leaves from a hopelessly imperfect copy has the sanction of long tradition, and is certainly as respectable a procedure as the patching of a Tudor bedstead. But the book has to be rare and costly to lend the procedure the dignity it has acquired, and the fact of substitution must, of course, be proclaimed and not concealed. And thereby what would be at worst a fraud and at best a total destruction of sentimental and commercial value in the instance of a "Scarlet Letter" or a "Raven" or a "Way of All Flesh" becomes an accepted bibliophilic convention where a Caxton or a Shakespeare folio or a "Pilgrim's Progress" is concerned. It all sounds suspiciously like class legislation, and it is.

The matching of odd volumes, however, hardly involves the same quality of subterfuge—and the definition of subterfuge is here intended to be sufficiently broad to include deliberate self-deceit. Conceding, as this discussion does, the impossibility of actually bringing the original pair or trio or quartette together again, the collector must accept the next best thing: to wit, a set matched as closely as may be.

It is a paradox of book-collecting—a paradox of which the acceptance is made inevitable by circumstance—that the matching of Victorian novels in parts is eminently permissible. No one buying a "Pickwick" or a "Vanity Fair" supposes for a moment that he is acquiring the identical nineteen periodical issues that were bought month by month by John Smith

of the Hammersmith Smiths at a shilling each nearly a century ago. On the excessively rare occasions when a "pure" set—the technical designation—appears in the auction room much is made of the fact of purity.

Some years ago a New York bookseller, after much searching on behalf of a Melville collector, secured from one out-of-town correspondent a copy of Volume One of "Clarel" and, a few days later, by a lucky chance, a copy of Volume Two from another. "Clarel," true to the trade fashions of the 70's, originally appeared in cloth of various hues—blue, terra cotta, green, perhaps others. The idea seems to have been to add a little gaiety to the retailer's shelves and thereby to ensnare the roving emporial eye. The sequential volumes that reached the New York bookseller were bound, unfortunately, the one in blue and the other in terra cotta cloth, and while the 70's had approved mosaic shelf displays, they did not carry the style so far as to have the scheme apply within the individual set. The blue-terra cotta set, a sort of heaven-and-earth combination, was a vivid bit of miscegenation, but, in default of a better, the bookseller offered it to the collector with the recommendation that he take it—at, of course, a figure attuned to the chromatic variety of the bindings. The collector declined the offer. This was, as I say, some years ago, and the collector may since have found a set nearer to his heart's desire, but "Clarel" is a genuinely rare book, and he may still be waiting. What, O reader, would you have done?

Libraries as Collectors

THE out-of-print bookseller (as distinguished from the dealer in first editions and definitive rarities) disperses his wares to two groups of purchasers: individuals and institutions. The individuals include every sort—collectors, browsers, students, scholars, general readers, and tenants of new apartments with sixty feet of shelfage to fill. The institutions, apart from a few specialty purchasers (such as clubs, industrial units, motion-picture studios) are public or semi-public libraries. When one considers how drastically library appropriations have been cut during the past four years, one can well appreciate the fact that the antiquarian bookseller has been doing precious little library business.

Enforced economy has introduced one factor into the situation that is likely to persist even when appropriations are restored. Librarians in the larger communities have come to the conclusion that there has been much needless duplication of acquisitions in the past. Take, for example, the New England city of A, which has an admirable public library and an historical society whose own collection is particularly rich in genealogy. The historical society is not overendowed, but it has funds sufficient to acquire such new genealogies as are published (it is usually a long time between new genealogies) in addition to the out-of-print compilations which it lacks. The public library of A, which formerly bought an occasional genealogy of strong local interest, buys genealogies no more. If a representative of the X family applies at the public library for the X genealogy, he is referred to the historical society.

Such a concentration of reference collections has obvious advantages to the student, though it inevitably restricts the bookseller's market. But a ray of hope is discernible. Out of such a situation may well develop a phase of selective institutional collecting that, initiated and prosecuted with intelligence, thoroughness, and enthusiasm, could exploit the potentialities of public and semi-public libraries, particularly the former, to an impressive degree. The opportunities for public libraries to become repositories of special collections are not even limited to the number of libraries, for there is no reason why one library should confine its activities to a single field.

JOHN T. WINTERICH.

PERSONALS

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