

The Clearing House

CONDUCTED BY AMY LOVEMAN

Inquiries, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, should be directed to Miss Loveman, in care of The Saturday Review.

A BALANCED RATION FOR A WEEK'S READING

ALL PASSION SPENT. By V. Sackville West. Doubleday, Doran.

THE CONTEMPORARY AND HIS SOUL. By Irwin Edman. Viking.

NIJINSKY. By Romola Nijinsky. Simon & Schuster.

Books on Village Improvement

E. F. of Barneveld, N. Y., wants a list of books on village improvement.

THERE is, of course, a growing literature on city planning but less is to be found on the small town. However, E. F. will probably find material that is helpful to him in John Nolen's *NEW TOWNS FOR OLD* (Marshall Jones), which records achievements in civic improvement in some American small towns and neighborhoods; in *RECENT ADVANCES IN TOWN PLANNING* (Macmillan), by T. Adams and others; *VILLAGE AND OPEN COUNTRY NEIGHBORHOODS* (Appleton-Century), by W. A. Terpenning; *THE LITTLE TOWN* (Macmillan), by H. P. Douglas, and in a volume issued by the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, entitled *PLANNING FOR RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS*. There is a bibliography, *PLANNING INFORMATION UP-TO-DATE* (Harvard University Press), which might prove useful.

Chronology of American History

"I shall appreciate it very much," writes L. N. of Harlingen, Texas, "if you will tell me where I may find a dictionary of dates in American history."

There is no good chronological history of America of which I know except as it is part of a universal survey. The best book of the sort is Ploetz's *MANUAL OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY* of which I understand Houghton Mifflin is to bring out a new edition in the fall. This will bring the record of events as close to the present as the exigencies of publishing make possible. Ploetz's is a time honored work, reliable and useful.

Books on Animals

A. N. J. of New York City asks for new books on animals.

Readers of Conibear's *NORTHLAND FOOTPRINTS*, reviewed recently in this magazine, should be interested in *BEAVER PIONEERS* by Wendell and Lucie Chapman (Scribner's). This is also a book about animals written in fictional form, and again close scientific observation lies behind the book, which is illustrated by an extraordinary series of photographs of beavers in action, probably the best that have ever been taken. Another very different animal book is Bastian Schmid's *INTERVIEWING ANIMALS* (Houghton Mifflin.) This is a translation from a German

book by an animal psychologist whose interest is not in the wild but in the habits of animals in association with man, and closely studied for their psychological characteristics. Most interesting is the controlled experiment showing how a dog finds his way home from new territory.

A Helpful Book

L. H. of Willard, Ohio, writes:

Allow me to suggest as a valuable aid in the selection of books for babies, as requested by Mrs. P. J. E. of Lansing, Mich., a very helpful little volume, written by the Librarian of Youngstown, Ohio Public Library, Mr. Clarence W. Sumner, entitled, *The Birthright of Babyhood*, published by Thomas Nelson & Sons, in 1936.

Mr. Sumner's long adventure in children's problems has culminated in the *Mother's Room*, an experiment in parent education, which has focused much attention, both professional and public, on his Library.

"The Britons"

In response to the recent inquiry of Mrs. R. K. P. of Colorado Springs, the following letters has come in to me:

I may not be able fully to answer the inquiry made by Mrs. R. K. P. of Colorado Springs in regards to where she can obtain a copy of *THE BRITONS*, but I may be able to give her some information which may lead to her getting one. "*The Britons: A Rhymed History of England*," which also included "Dates, General Questions," etc., was copyrighted by Brentano in 1889, and ran into a seventh edition published in 1912. It was a small school book of the "Somerville Series" and designated as "Memory Exercises." I believe I am right in the impression that its author, who used Felix Faber as a pen name, was Miss Meta D. Huger. Miss Huger for many years had a small, private school for girls in New York, first at 537 Fifth Avenue and, later, at 726 Fifth Avenue. As one of her pupils, in the Nineties, I well remember how once a week the entire school recited *THE BRITONS* in unison. There were approximately 45 verses and we would begin with the last—"Then came Victoria, only eighteen," etc., and end with the first verse—"First came the Britons, a barbarous race," etc. As a memory exercise the verses have certainly excelled for I can recite many of them to this day, as well as remember events in English history which otherwise might have become somewhat mixed in the past.

Should Mrs. R. K. P. fail to get a copy of the book kindly assure her that if she cares to write to me it will give me pleasure to send her a typewritten copy of the verses which I can easily have taken from my copy of *THE BRITONS*.

Sincerely,

ELFRIDA DE R. BARROW
(MRS. CRAIG).

Savannah, Ga.

The AMEN CORNER

It seems a long time to the Oxonian since he talked at length about his favorite pocket series, the *World's Classics*, those beautiful and really pocket-size little dark blue volumes. But vacation time has arrived, and the first thing that comes to mind is this ideal series of books which offer so large a selection¹ and make so small a dent in one's luggage—and pocketbook.²

This year we are particularly lucky. We never travel without Trollope, and two of his longer novels have just been added to the series.

PHINEAS FINN, (in two volumes), is the first of Trollope's "Political" novels, a series which ranks with the celebrated "Barsetshire" novels in interest. All of Trollope's numerous works will eventually be reprinted in the *World's Classics*. PHINEAS FINN was the twenty-fourth title by Trollope to appear in this pocket series. PHINEAS REDUX followed later in the summer to make the twenty-fifth. (The *World's Classics* series, by the way, now comprises over 450 books in all.)

Another new title is *THE WISDOM OF THE SIMPLE* by Constance Holme, a collection of short stories and sketches by the Yorkshire writer who has eight novels in the *World's Classics* series.

Lord Raglan's *THE HERO*,³ which has a subtitle "A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama" is a survey of the whole field of the traditional narrative, concluding that it is derived from dramatic ritual, and never from historic fact. Lord Raglan has some fun at the expense of orthodox scholars. One of them, he writes, "tells us that 'in the heroic age they liked to be told the news, and failing that would put up with ancient history. At the moment of the Odyssey the subjects asked for and listened to were the last great events of contemporary history, the siege of Troy and the return of the Greek sovereigns. . .'" "It is incredible," observes Lord Raglan, "that people ever existed who could say, 'You don't know what won the Derby? Oh well, tell us a bit about the Norman Conquest' and on any theory it seems inconceivable that the Homeric poems were composed soon enough after the event for their contents to come as news to the Greeks."

GRAND LARCENY,⁴ being *The Trial of Jane Leigh Perrot*, Aunt of Jane Austen, by Sir Frank Douglas MacKinnon, contains a reprint of a contemporary report of her trial; an account by Sir Frank MacKinnon of the state of the English prisons, and of criminal law and procedure at that time; and a series of letters written by Mrs. Leigh Perrot from prison, and to her by friends and relatives.

In 1800 Mrs. Leigh Perrot was tried at the Taunton assizes after seven months in the county jail at Ilchester, on the charge of stealing a card of lace from a Bath milliner's shop. As the law then stood, conviction would have meant a sentence of death, though in practice it would probably have been commuted to transportation to Australia. She was, however, acquitted.

THE THANE OF CAWDOR,⁵ by David Baird, is *Macbeth* as a Detective Story, the narrative as it might have been written by Lady Macbeth's physician, before the sleep-walking had confirmed the suspicions which he had formed on evidences (reported in the play) left by the Macbeths.

Well, we're off!

THE OXONIAN.

(¹) Write for complete list. Oxford University Press, 114 Fifth Avenue. (²) \$.80 each. (³) \$3.50. (⁴) \$3.00. (⁵) \$2.00.

The New Books

Fiction

FOOLISH GIANT. By Robert Westerby.
Harcourt, Brace. 1937. \$2.

Monozygotic (identical) twins are popularly supposed to be more closely connected on the psychological plane than ordinary brothers and sisters. Mr. Westerby makes his novel turn on this debatable but implicitly dramatic theory. Van and Jon Logan are the sons of a California radical, left to take care of themselves when their father is tarred and feathered to death by the vigilant citizenry. Van becomes a successful prizefighter, largely to support his nervous and frail brother, who wishes to be a violinist. Jealous of his twin and hopelessly involved, Jon commits suicide. Van wins his crucial bout and continues on his way to the championship, but without purpose or pleasure—not even nature's remedy in the person of a ready and willing heroine seems likely to make up for his loss.

This sad case is detailed in fairly competent fashion by Mr. Westerby who, though an Englishman, writes of the great American boxing business as though born within sight of Madison Square Garden. He does not exploit the full possibilities of his principal situation, however, and stacks the cards somewhat unfairly against his hero by making Jon merely a nuisance to everyone about him. Under the circumstances, Van's devotion seems miraculous, monozygotic or not. The early California scenes and the account of Van's last fight are the best and most convincing things in the story, indicating that the author's future lies in the novel of action rather than in character study.

T. P., JR.

PLACE IN THE CITY. By Howard Fast.
Harcourt, Brace. 1937. \$2.50.

This is a novel about New York, written with a great deal of enthusiasm and fierce gesturing upon the part of its author. Here, he cries in numerous asides, is a folk-tale of Manhattan, here is the life and heart of my city. Unfortunately they aren't there. To possess them his folk-tale would have to have more credibility, more freshness, more tight, rounded unity. Mr. Fast is a native, but his picture of New York is as blurred by sentimentality and distorted by melo-

drama as though he were a scenario writer who had never been east of the Hudson. It is disconcerting to see the vigor, almost the creative fervor, with which he produces that old cast of stock characters strutting their stale stuff: the bold, heroic pimp, the martyred prostitute, the poet who dies, the musician who plays crashing chords, the moralizing policeman, the ward heeler who owns the district, the meek little Jewish tobacco-nist, all the rest. Even these could be made to live if Mr. Fast had done some restorative work upon them, had tried, for instance, to show that his poet was a poet, or his ward heeler a man instead of a functioning power. But for the most part they are allowed to move along the grooves they have followed in their long fictional history, and not even the occasional pages of spirited writing can make them or their story credible.

N. L. R.

TRUTH TO TELL. By Alice Grant Rosman.
Putnams. 1937. \$2.

This is a gentle and agreeable novel, on the Paul and Virginia theme, with tragedy left out and pleasant English countryside put in. A young brother and sister, separated in their early childhood, seek and find each other in a society where the snobs are rich and snobbish, and the nice people are fine and democratic and just sufficiently hard up to make things cosy. Like so many such books the early chapters, dealing with the childhood of the two, are somewhat more convincing than those later on, where the adolescent slang is improbably coy. Miss Rosman writes

highly successful books, which may justly be described as wholesome, and safely recommended for not too stimulating veranda reading. Her already large public are going to like "Truth to Tell," and if your Aunt Minnie wants an undisturbing book to take on her vacation here it is.

F. W.

MISS BUNCLE'S BOOK. By D. E. Stevenson.
Farrar & Rinehart. 1937. \$2.

Artless and ladylike throughout, this is an awkward book on which to comment because the author has rather guilelessly conveyed the impression that here is a woman writing a book about a woman writing a book. Just a lark, in other words, but it is not quite larkish enough.

Miss Barbara Buncle needed money, so she wrote a book about the village in which she lived. It was published at once and became a best-seller. It was a very accurate book full of observations from life, and while Miss Buncle had troubled to change the names of her characters she hadn't bothered to change anything else. Consequently when the book hit the village there was the devil to pay. Everyone recognized himself at a glance and nearly everyone was angry. Miss Buncle (something new in authors) did not tell a soul that she was responsible for all the tohu-bohu, and nobody guessed it. Miss Buncle's publisher, delighted with her success and delighted, before long, with Miss Buncle, urged her on to further endeavor, and she wrote another book about everything that had happened since her first book had been published.

Artless again, the author leaves one with the conviction that she thinks her book is like Miss Buncle's, one which may be regarded either as a satire or as

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE KRISTIANA KILLERS D. Q. Burleigh (Dutton: \$2.)	Maine lumber-mill owner almost murdered; Canadian helper entirely so. Dr. Cyr, with G-men helping, clears up triple mystery.	Novel background, sinuous plot, good characters, sufficient shooting, adept sleuthing, engaging romantic asides, and exciting wind-up.	Grade A
DEATH AT EIGHT BELLS F. A. Kummer (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard: \$2.)	Assorted Washingtonians on pleasure yacht bound down Potomac run into murder which red headed young "amateur" speedily solves.	Interesting revelation of crooked lobbyist's machinations, with agreeable aqueous background, romantic overtones, and sufficient amount of sleuthing.	Fair
THE SINISTER MADONNA Wallace Jackson (Hopkins: \$2.)	Theft of priceless but unlucky painting brings death to seven or eight criminals and much grief to Inspectors Clancy and Straker.	Much killing—with holocaust at end—but chiefly interesting for clash of American gangsters and private sleuth with English authorities.	Average
ROUND ROBIN Graham W. Bain (Lippincott: \$2.)	Robin Hood, who leaves card bearing Green Arrow, spoils five unlovely "Egyptians" and retrieves stolen fortune for beauteous gal.	Romantic thief affair, done with gossamer touch, considerable excitement, and airy disregard for anything approaching credibility.	Diaphanous

