

The New Books

Biography

THE WOMAN WHO ROSE AGAIN. By Gleb Botkin. Revell. 1937. \$3.

This is the full story of the Anastasia case, told by Gleb Botkin, son and grandson of the personal physicians of the last three Russian Czars. Botkin tells the story of the long struggle to establish Mrs. Tschaikovsky's claim to the title of Grand Duchess Anastasia. He himself for ten years has been a foremost supporter of the lady's claims. And now, unfolding for the first time the full account of this struggle, he gives us a picture of royal intrigue and backbiting, of a secret hidden fortune, and of a fine display of royal and very Russian temperament. True or not the story he tells remains a fascinating tale. Personally this reviewer believes M. Botkin.

The author first met Mrs. Tschaikovsky at Seon, the Bavarian castle of Duke George of Leuchtenberg, in 1927. Before that he had supposed that all of the Czar's immediate family had died along with him. So Botkin went to Seon expecting to find an impostor. But instantly he was struck by Mrs. Tschaikovsky's remarkable personal resemblance to the young girl he had known and played with as a child years before. Her very mannerisms, her concern for recognition not from the world but only from her supposed noble relatives, and her intimate and almost subconscious knowledge of family secrets and jokes, made her convincing to him.

Realizing how dangerous was Anastasia's position in Europe where plots to discredit her and have her declared hopelessly insane were daily rumored, Botkin hastened back to America and there succeeded in checkmating a plan to have Anastasia declared an impostor and to snatch her fortune from her. The Romanov inheritance still sits in the Bank of England awaiting the day when Mrs. Tschaikovsky's claims will be finally approved or discredited.

W. P.

END OF TRACK: The Reminiscences of James H. Kyner, as told to Hawthorne Daniel. Caldwell, Ohio: The Claxton Printers Ltd. 1937. \$3.

This book makes an interesting addition to first-hand pioneer records. In a simple and straightforward fashion, Hawthorne Daniel tells the experiences of James H. Kyner, a retired railroad builder, from the latter's boyhood days spent in a small Ohio village in the 1850's, through three exciting decades of construction work on pioneer railroads of the Northwest, to retirement early in the present century. Between the lines and beyond the memories of a more robust and less complex age, the socially minded reader will find material with which to compare the heydays of opportunity and rugged individualism with the present. Together, the two collaborators give a vivid and human picture of the older West, its primitive problems and working conditions. From

beginning to end the book has a tang of honesty about it and that quality of description found only in the reporting of an eye-witness.

M. D.

Fiction

NIGHTLY SHE SINGS. By Edwin Olmstead. Knopf. 1937. \$2.

This pallid contribution to the Hammett-and-Cain department is billed as "a blend of sentiment and sophistication, of tenderness and farce." Hollywood might buy the title and produce the blend, but the producers would have, as usual, to alter the story. As it stands, it is merely a lurid and improbable melodrama about a girl who has a row with her boy-friend, loses her temper, and lets a taxi-driver take her to a cheap clip-joint. How she gets out unscathed and makes up her lover's quarrel is worthy of "Poor But Honest, or Only a Working Girl." The style and dialogue are "modern," the setting is New York, the action takes place in one night. Grade C for the rental libraries.

E. C.

RUNAROUND. By Benjamin Appel. Dutton. 1937. \$2.50.

There is interesting material in the activities of those lowest of city politicians, the west side ward-healers, and Mr. Appel knows the vote-getting racket as well as he knows Hell's Kitchen. He has produced a good and convincing case-history of an assembly district which split off from Tammany in 1933 and worked for Fusion. (Presumably the author chose the Fusion movement to imply that the reform parties offer little hope for improvement over the methods of the Republicans and Democrats; but the story has little or no bearing on the La Guardia administration.) The book shows how the leaders knife each other for nominations, how the ward-healers sell themselves out for the jobs which are too few to go around and which don't last long anyway. The depression has made "itchflies" of them all, and the result is disillusionment. The sympathetic characters are Sleepy Collohan, a smart Irishman with a labor-union background, and his lieutenant, Danny Englander. Sleepy is the one who gets the runaround from the political boss of the district. Sleepy and Danny are both decent, but they can't play straight in a dirty game. Mixed in with the political story are sidelights on love in the depression; petty politics won't support a family, but sex comes cheap.

"Runaround" is better as a case-history than as a novel. Mr. Appel sketches in his characters deftly, but in one plane; they are like clever line-drawings which have neither depth nor color. The situations are accurately described, but there is as little development in action as in characterization. As a result, the book, after an interesting beginning, gets a bit dull towards the middle. Once you have got the idea, there is not enough to carry

you along. Characters endlessly repeat their tag-lines; whole scenes practically reproduce themselves over and over. The author explains in a preface that his "major intention is to try to show in 'Runaround' the new hopes of those millions of Americans, the forgotten men as well as the almost forgotten, for a true democratic America . . . to show the growth of this dream in the minds and hearts of such plain Americans as Sleepy Collohan, Danny Englander, and Dan's girl, Ann." As to Sleepy, all he shows is that Sleepy had compunctions about playing dirty politics, played them nevertheless, and got the runaround. With Danny and Ann, their insecure jobs, their liberal impulses, their hopes for marriage and enough money to live decently, he puts his idea across more successfully. But while Danny and Ann are human and recognizable, they are not deeply enough imagined to be as living and poignant as they might have been.

G. S.

Miscellaneous

BACKSTAGE AT THE OPERA. By Rose Heylbut and Aimé Gerber. New York: Crowell. 1937. \$3.

During the past few years, the operatic broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House have brought about a revolution in the musical tastes of the American public. As the authors of this book put it, "From being 'scared' of opera, the American public has progressed to the point of listening to it; thence, to being curious about it"—and in this entertainingly informative volume they have set out to satisfy a large measure of this curiosity, particularly as regards the inner workings of New York's famous Opera House.

Aimé Gerber, who is paymaster of the Metropolitan, joined the House staff forty years ago, in the days of Maurice Grau, as office-boy. It was Grau who established the Metropolitan's glamorous reputation by engaging such "stars" as Emma Calvé, Emma Eames, Schumann-Heink, Nordica, Jean and Edouard de Reszke, Victor Maurel, and Pol Plançon. Caruso, who belonged to the long reign of Gatti-Casazza, gets an entire chapter to himself in the section devoted to personalities of the opera.

The most interesting and valuable portion of the book is that devoted to the administrative and technical routine of the Metropolitan Opera considered as a musical "factory." The preparation, setting, shifting, and storing of scenery; the planning of the repertoire; the engagement of singers; the casting of parts; the carrying-out of complicated rehearsal schedules; the organization of tours—these and other details of administration are fully described here.

And since the human element is so much a part of opera's glamour, the authors have been generous with personal anecdotes concerning the singers and impresarios who have made operatic history at the Metropolitan. Unconventional photographs also help the reader to penetrate behind the scenes. Except for the misspelling of some names and titles, the book seems to be generally reliable.

G. C.

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

SHOW BOAT. by Edna Ferber. Doubleday, Doran.

WINE FROM THESE GRAPES. By Edna St. Vincent Millay. Harpers.

GROVER CLEVELAND. By Allan Nevins. Dodd, Mead.

American Travel Books

R. L. M. of Maumee, Ohio, asks for names of American travel books covering the South, Southwest, and California.

HAVING just returned myself from a glorious motor trip through Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and the Southwest, I fell with avidity on R. L. M.'s question. Evidently from his letter he, too, is contemplating traveling by auto—or possibly by trailer—and wants references that will be particularly useful on such a journey. Personally I think what he will get most satisfaction from are the general works of description, and such incidental literature as will give him a background for the country he will see. For instance, quite by accident I found myself when in New Mexico in Bishop's Lodge, a hotel four miles out of Santa Fe which is on the site which Willa Cather used in *DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP*. Now there's a book worth rereading anyway and which will be specially interesting in connection with a visit to the capital of New Mexico. Then there are Mary Austin's *LAND OF JOURNEY'S ENDING* (Appleton-Century) for the region between the Rio Grande and the Rio Colorado, Arizona, and the western half of New Mexico, and her *CALIFORNIA: LAND OF THE SUN* (Houghton Mifflin) for the coast state. Aubrey Drury's *CALIFORNIA: AN INTIMATE GUIDE* (Harpers) is an informal manual containing history, literature, and description all woven together. Laura Adams Arner, whose juvenile, *WATERLESS MOUNTAIN*, which carried off a prize a year or two ago, could well be read by adults also, has a volume entitled *SOUTHWEST* (Longmans, Green) that is illustrated by the author's paintings and which is an interpretation of the region. Santa

Fe, Taos, the Carlsbad Caves, Hoover Dam, Death Valley, etc., are covered in *THE WEST IS STILL WILD* (Houghton Mifflin), by Henry Carr, and the famous old route by which pioneers went out to the Southwest by Robert L. Duffus in *SANTA FE TRAIL* (Longmans, Green). Charles J. Finger's *ADVENTURES UNDER SAPPHIRE SKIES* (Morrow) and John T. Faris's *SEEING THE FAR WEST* (Lippincott) are other much liked books. The account of an automobile tour to which R. L. M. refers, and which he thinks may have been by Lewis Gannett, is the literary columnist's chronicle of a family jaunt entitled *SWEET LAND* (Doubleday, Doran). J. T. Faris has a volume entitled *SEEING THE SUNNY SOUTH* (Lippincott), but descriptive books on that section are few.

If R. L. M. has the time for a little extra reading he ought to try to get hold of Frederick Law Olmstead's volumes on his horseback journeys through the South made shortly before the Civil War. Though the social conditions which he describes there have long since passed away still so much of the psychology of the present South—indeed even so much of its general condition—is colored by its past that reading Olmstead's books cannot but add to understanding of and interest in the present of the section.

If R. L. M. is contemplating a motor tour he will be wise to gather in from filling stations or hotels the folders which in addition to maps so frequently contain description and historical material. The railroads and bus lines especially have leaflets of the sort that are useful, and Chambers of Commerce of towns of size can furnish pamphlets containing historical and statistical matter. The national parks all distribute booklets written by experts, which present in addition to factual information direction as to trails, special points of interest, etc.

The Works of Sara Teasdale

M. B. H. of Dorchester, Mass., wants a list of the complete works of Sara Teasdale in the order of their publication; to know whether there are others to be published, and where, outside of Authors Today and Yesterday, the Encyclopedia, etc., biographical material on her can be obtained.

To take the last part of the question first. *THE DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY* (Scribners) contains an authoritative article on Miss Teasdale by the late Harriet Monroe, a footnote to which states that information on the poet can be had from John Hall Wheelock or her sister. Macmillan issues a pamphlet on Miss Teasdale which is sent free on request. The publishers, also, have announced for publication on September 28 *THE COLLECTED POEMS OF SARA TEASDALE* which will contain presumably everything of the poet's that is to see the light. It will include her early book, *SONNETS TO DUSE*,

now long out of print and unavailable. That was the first volume published by Miss Teasdale; her other books came in the following order: *RIVERS TO THE SEA* (1915), *LOVE SONGS* (1917), *FLAME TO SHADOW* (1920), *DARK OF THE MOON* (1926), and *STRANGE VICTORY*, published posthumously in 1933. In addition two anthologies appeared, *THE ANSWERING VOICE* (1917) and *RAINBOW GOLD* (1922).

Good Reading

A. W. B. of Pomona, N. Y., has just been reading the works of Mary Webb, and wants to know if there is no other novelist whose books she might find equally enthralling.

If she hasn't read Ellen Glasgow with any consistency I suggest that she turn to her with perhaps *BARREN GROUND* (Doubleday, Doran) as the book to start with, and next the delightful series beginning with *THE ROMANTIC COMEDIANS*. No one of our novelists makes more rewarding reading, is a keener student of social manners, a more coruscating and yet sympathetic critic, or a more witty and polished writer.

Does Any One Know?

J. B. L. of Cleveland, Ohio, writes:

"I have on hand a book on James Reed Spalding, an erudite journalist who traveled extensively through Europe during the revolutionary activities of 1848-49 as a foreign correspondent for the *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*. He was one of the founders of the *New York World* in 1860, and the following year became an editor of the *New York Times*. Following the Civil War he traveled throughout the South during the Reconstruction Period, but whether he wrote anything of his observations I have no knowledge. In 1866 he had a rather hair-raising experience when stranded on an island in the Red River, as a result of which he died in 1872.

"All the references which I have sought about Spalding are quite meager. I should therefore be glad to have whatever matter you can unearth bearing on his life and work."

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