

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

THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS. By Thorstein Veblen. Viking.

MRS. DALLOWAY. By Virginia Woolf. Harcourt, Brace.

RENAISSANCE. By Edna St. Vincent Millay. Harpers.

The Trojan War for Young Readers

Can you advise me (writes C. P. M. of New York City) of any account of the Trojan War suitable for a juvenile reader—about the grade, say, of Kingsley's GREEK HEROES or Hawthorne's TANGLEWOOD TALES?

YES, of a most delightful one, Padraic Colum's THE ADVENTURES OF ODYSSEUS AND THE TALE OF TROY OR THE CHILDREN'S HOMER (Macmillan). Mr. Colum writes with a poet's appreciation of his material and renders the great Homeric legends with spirit and beauty. He has simplified sufficiently and abbreviated enough to bring the tale within the compass of youthful interest while still retaining its dignity. There are several other versions to be had including the one on which my generation was brought up and which still holds rank among the favorites—THE ILIAD FOR BOYS AND GIRLS and THE ODYSSEY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS (Macmillan), by Alfred J. Church. These are retold from Homer and follow the original in the order of events.

The Far West

W. G. P. of Atlanta, Ga., *wants to know if there is any book that does for our Far West what Clara Laughlin's books do for European countries.*

ROUNDBOUT AMERICA (Harpers), by Anne Merriman Peck and Enid Johnson, and SEEING THE FAR WEST (Lippincott), by John T. Faris, may just fill the bill.

A European Tour

J. P. C. of Pasadena, Calif., *with her husband and her two daughters, aged fourteen and nineteen, are to make a summer's trip through France with a short time in Switzerland and Italy. Their packing space is limited and they want some book or books which would cover much and suit them all. Their itinerary includes Brittany, Chartres, Amiens, and Rheims, as the elder daughter is studying the history of art, Paris, Tours, Biarritz, Carcassonne, the Riviera, Switzerland, and a dash through Italy.*

It's amazing how few books there are to be found (outside the regular guides) which cover in brief so wide a scope. But one work, and that not only for the sake of the older daughter, ought to go with them despite the fact that its locale is restricted. That is Henry Adams's great study, MONT SAINT MICHEL AND CHARTRES

(Houghton Mifflin), a book which will illuminate the scene for them as nothing else can. For general description of the countries through which they pass there are such works as Mrs. Ange Mosher's THE SPELL OF BRITANNY, Clara S. Laughlin's SO YOU'RE GOING TO FRANCE (Houghton Mifflin), which covers precisely the terrain of J. P. C.'s projected trip, Frank Schoonmaker's COME WITH ME THROUGH FRANCE (McBride), J. F. Muirhead's A WAYFARER IN SWITZERLAND (Houghton Mifflin), and Herbert W. Allen's ITALY FROM END TO END (Dodd, Mead), this last a book that is vivacious and fresh, and excellent for the traveler in a hurry.

Scottish Novelists

M. P. C. of Sheffield, Ala., *wants the names of some modern Scottish novelists.*

One of the most famous of them has gone since she has addressed her letter to me, and not only Scotland but the world is the poorer for the passing of Barrie. Cunninghame Graham (Doubleday, Doran), too, is dead, and Kenneth Grahame (Dodd, Mead), who, though he lived so much of his life in England, was born in Scotland. This list almost takes on the form of a necrology, for Lewis Grassie Gibbon (Doubleday, Doran), too, is dead. Of the living perhaps the most interesting writers at present are Neil Gunn (Lippincott), L. A. G. Strong (Knopf), and Naomi Mitchison (Harcourt, Brace).

History for a Boy of Thirteen

L. W. W. of Raleigh, N. C., *writes: "I shall be grateful if you will help me find a book for a boy who is approaching his eighth grade and his thirteenth birthday. He asks for an interesting history book, preferably not American history. He has read Van Loon's HISTORY OF MANKIND."*

If, after having read Van Loon, he wants to fill in in greater detail the chronicle of world events he might find very much to his taste Geoffrey Parsons's THE STREAM OF HISTORY (Scribners), an orderly, smoothly flowing, and highly readable narrative of the development of civilization from early times to the present. If he would, however, better enjoy confining his reading to a more definite period he would no doubt find absorbing any of the series by Marjorie and C. H. B. Quennell in which Volumes I and II of EVERYDAY THINGS IN ENGLAND (Scribners), for instance, covers the feudal period. These books, and all in the series, are packed full of delightful illustrations and are replete with the small details and the paraphernalia of living in medieval times which most boys revel in. If, by chance, this boy, however, prefers biography to history, Captain Liddell Hart's THE MAN BEHIND THE LEGEND (Dodd, Mead), a version which the young would enjoy, of the career of Lawrence of Arabia might be the very thing for him.

an impressive novel

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"From a number of angles 'White Mule' is literary news. It is a powerful and resonant novel."—N. L. Rothman, *The Saturday Review*.

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PULPWOOD EDITOR

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Poet's Workshop

THE NOTE-BOOKS AND PAPERS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS. Edited by Humphry House. New York: Oxford University Press. 1937. \$8.50.

Reviewed by ARNOLD WHITRIDGE

THIS is emphatically a book for the initiated. The casual reader of Hopkins who is puzzled by the strange technique and yet attracted by the ardor and freshness of the language will probably be disappointed by the miscellany here set before us. Not a little of Hopkins's fascination lies in his willingness to accept the mental and spiritual harness of the Jesuits and his unwillingness to accept the much lighter harness of traditional poetic form. He reserves the right to make his own laws in poetry, whereas in matters of conduct and belief, where most men clamor for freedom, he joyfully surrenders to the exacting discipline of the Society of Jesus.

This volume does little to explain the paradox of the restless inquiring mind that yet found freedom in the Jesuit Order, but those who are devoted to the Hopkins cult will find it none the less interesting. The most important item rescued by Mr. House is a journal covering the years 1868-1875, a period of Hopkins's life of which we have hitherto known very little. Among other things the miscellany includes some juvenile poems, a Platonic dialogue on the origin of Beauty, lecture notes on the technique of poetry, sermons, and a long commentary on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. Mr. House had originally intended to use these papers as material for biography but it soon became clear that the necessary preliminary to any critical work had to be an edition of the notebooks. Now that the ground has been cleared by this scholarly edition we can look forward to the critical estimate of Hopkins which Mr. House has refrained from attempting in this volume. Certainly he is the man to write the definitive life.

The journal, though it contains no hint of the mountains of the mind, "frightful sheer, no man fathomed," which are so essential a part of Hopkins's poetry, and though the word poetry is hardly mentioned in it at all, could not have been written by any one but a poet. No one since Wordsworth has loved the "mighty world of eye and ear" more passionately than Hopkins, and no one, not even Wordsworth himself, has observed "byways beauty" with more scrupulous accuracy. Any one interested in seeing the raw material out of which poetry comes transmuted into gold has only to turn to the journal and with it read the poem "Inversnaid," one of the loveliest and simplest poems that Hopkins ever wrote. That is the fun of this volume. Read by itself it is disjointed and uneven, but read side by side with the poetry it is more enlightening than the most sympathetic critic. Even the sermons, a form of literature in which Hopkins is not seen at his best, contain flashes that illuminate the poems.

Most of his juvenile poetry Hopkins deliberately destroyed but the extracts from the early diaries include a few poems written in 1864 and 1835. There are

not immature poems but they might have been written by other men, Arnold or Coventry Patmore, and the fact that Hopkins disavowed them shows that he was aware they were not stamped with his own genius. After reading the early poems, the lecture notes, and the sermons, we come back again to the journal. The charm of it is not easy to analyze. There is no shrewd comment on the giants of the day, no biting satire, no criticism of life—only an extraordinarily vivid perception of the variegated beauty of the universe. Among all the English poets who have loved Nature there has been no more accurate observer than Father Hopkins and no one more resourceful in recording his observations. Any one who has made the effort to bring his mind alongside of Hopkins will enjoy exploring the workshop where the poetry was fashioned.

Arnold Whitridge is a professor in the history, arts, and letters department of Yale University.

In Love with Books

MR. PIRATE: A Romance. By A. B. Schiffrin. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. 1937. \$1.75.

Reviewed by ILAH NIEHOFF

THIS slight but pleasant book which brings Mitchell Kennerley back into the publishing field is sub-titled "A Romance," and the first few pages put us in a hopeful and expectant mood. The hero's emotions and our own interest are stirred by the description of a brief but tantalizing glimpse of his wife, Mary, disappearing in a crowded street. We are pleasantly conscious of the author's smooth, intuitive style, reminiscent of Robert Nathan, but compounded of his ability to turn a phrase quietly and effectively and his awareness of the subtle overtones in human relations that make life more colorful and exciting. But Mary, who promised to be rather a delicious creature, is soon dismissed as a faithless and errant wife; Mr. Pirate's real romance is with the books in his small but well-stocked second hand bookshop.

This shift of interest from the alluring Mary to books and a bookshop proves to be a serious let-down, and thereafter the story becomes a bit mechanical and forced. This is not to belittle the romantic feelings a man may have for books; the joy he may feel as he exults in his secret knowledge of the emotions and excitement pent up within the books upon his shelves is a fine thing. But such feelings may not be mouthed or dissected too casually without suspicion of sentimentality. Mr. Schiffrin may escape this damning charge, but the romance between the hero and his books never quite comes true.

We regret this failure to sustain a good beginning. There are many who should be sympathetic to the quiet and humorous book lover, and had style and story been maintained we might have had a novel to entertain and charm us. Let us use the publisher's amusing flash, "People are reading it who never read it before," to express a hope that we may have an opportunity to read something of Mr. Schiffrin's again.

Early Chinese Culture

THE BIRTH OF CHINA. A Study of the Formative Period of Chinese Civilization. By Herrlee Glessner Creel. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. (A John Day Book.) 1937. \$3.75.

Reviewed by KENNETH S. LATOURETTE

ARCHAEOLOGY, as we use that term in the Occident, has been late in beginning in China. Only recently have methods been employed comparable with those which have opened to us fresh chapters of the past in Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Greece. For our knowledge of the beginnings of China we have had to depend, as we did for the history of Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean world until two or three generations ago, upon books which have long been common property and upon objects gathered unsystematically by lovers of antiquity. That is now rapidly being changed. Within the past twenty years the scholarly world has been thrilled by excavations which disclose paleolithic and neolithic man, and by the Peking man.

Some of the most startling of all the discoveries are those which throw fresh light upon the Shang. The Shang is the second of the traditional dynasties of China and the commonly accepted dates place it in the second millennium before Christ. For a good many years oracle bones, many of them inscribed, have been coming to light from the remains of its ancient capital in the modern Anyang in the Province of Honan. To these have latterly been added bronzes. Still more recently Chinese archeologists using modern methods have been excavating on the site. These finds are being collated with what has heretofore been known about the Shang. As a result, to our eager and astonished eyes is being opened a new world. In the Shang we see bronzes displaying a high artistic sense and a skill in casting which has never been surpassed. We have written characters which are so finished that they seem to presuppose a long preceding period of development. We discover evidences of an ordered officialdom and of a society with marked distinctions between wealth and poverty. Shang society may have been cruel. Certainly headless skeletons indicate slaughter of retainers at the burial of their lord. It was a religious age, with extensive sacrifices—of animals and men—and with constant efforts by means of oracles to determine the will of the unseen spirits.

It is this early Chinese culture which Dr. Creel has here presented to us. He is one of the most brilliant and hard-working of the extraordinary group of able young Americans who are devoting their lives to sinology. He is, also, eminently qualified for this particular task. Here, in a volume meant for the general public, he has brought forth the new information and has fitted it into the fabric of what has long been known.

Dr. Creel writes well, and he has illuminated his text with numerous figures and illustrations. The present work will prove fascinating to both layman and specialist. Nowhere else in a Western language is so much of the recently acquired knowledge of the Shang to be found between the covers of one book.