

The New Books

Biography

MY WAR WITH THE UNITED STATES.

By Ludwig Bemelmans. Viking. 1937. \$2.50.

Mr. Bemelmans came to this country in 1914, and served in the United States Army during the War. He kept a German diary from which this short book has now been translated, presumably by himself. Except for the use of the present tense, however, it is not in diary form. It gives a selective account of his experiences as a bewildered but aggressively curious foreigner in the service of a nation whose ways he found utterly strange.

First stationed with a hospital unit at Fort Ontario, Mr. Bemelmans made himself unpopular until he had learned to accept the difference between the German soldier's sense of discipline, to which he had been accustomed, and the American's good-natured contempt for all authority. When he tried to enforce his own authority as Wardmaster with a Colt forty-five he was arrested and called up before the amused Colonel, who pointed out that "the basic function of a Hospital, Private Bemelmans, is to cure men, not to shoot them." The next transgression was contrariwise: he narrowly missed being put on the carpet again for handing the same Colt to two prisoners he was supposed to be guarding, in order to give them proof of his friendship. Having unlimited curiosity and a strong stomach for unpleasant jobs, he became a volunteer attendant at the Hospital for the Insane that was being organized at Fort Porter. The contagion of insanity, as a result of which a good proportion of the attendants ended by being patients themselves, cast its shadow over him, but he soon learned to take refuge from the threat of madness in pleasant memories of the high Tyrolean villages in which he had passed his boyhood, memories of which the reader has the benefit in two nostalgic chapters.

Mr. Bemelmans writes in a sketchy style that successfully avoids giving away too many of the essential facts. An ampler treatment might have shed light on incidents that in the present economical rendering often seems pointless. Many of the personal actions related, as it is, appear entirely devoid of motives. Even so, the fact would remain that he evidently has little or nothing to say. His comments on the life around him are all more in the nature of sentiments than insights—if one excepts such platitudes as the contrast between German and American military discipline. His characterizations of the men and women he was thrown with do not often progress beyond statements of who was nice and who wasn't, with occasional addenda of physical peculiarities. And he leaves the reader's curiosity regarding himself largely unsatisfied.

No doubt the fact that this is a diary in a language foreign to the author must excuse the consistently bad writing. The publishers consider it "a special gem of eccentric literature"; that may be why

they left such statements as "left and right of the door are two cement lines" uncorrected, for fear of spoiling the bloom. The author's pencil and wash drawings at the chapter-heads are delightful and help relieve the text. The best sentence is: "Mississippi is filled with colored people and so is the patient I am taking there." If only there were more like it!

L. J. H., JR.

Fiction

MARA. By Stoyan Christowe. Crowell. 1937. \$2.

Stoyan Christowe has already found recognition, within the covers of *Story* and elsewhere, for his fervent, earthy tales of the Balkan peasant. In his first novel he scorns any easy transition out of the short story but takes a tremendous, ambitious stride forward, for "Mara" is a book modeled on epic lines and written with all the vigor and fullness of detail that such a project demands. The background is Macedonia's desperate struggle to be free of Turkish rule, and against this, which alone would be a story of considerable proportions, Christowe traces three or four other major themes: the life, thoughts, and character of the Macedonian peasant; the history and tactics of the rebel leaders; the process of one actual revolutionary plot in Salonika; the development of a typical revolutionist, in Paul, the central figure of the book. All of these are followed carefully and simultaneously, each shedding light upon the other and fusing at last

in the tragic dénouement at Salonika. No more ambitious design could be conceived, and in terms of interest, emotional consistency, drama, Christowe has carried it off. As a work of art it has only its overweening ambition against it, for the separate themes, complete and arresting as each is in development, do not blend into that integral whole which the first rate historical novel must be. We are conscious always of following the patterns separately, when we should in fact be immersed in one great pattern of which the others should have been fluid elements. With this one exception taken, the novel must be regarded as decidedly successful and well worth reading.

N. L. R.

GENTLEMAN OF THE PARTY. By A. G. Street. Dutton. 1937. \$2.50.

It seems a safe assumption to make:—no dialect is more baffling and awkward than that of Wiltshire. Certainly none looks more disastrous in print. "I 'low wold Nick spiled the shape o' they downs, Jargie, out o' cussedness, zno. 'Appen th' Almighty made 'em straightish an' then the devil, 'ee come along an' bit out a chunk yer an' there fur 'is dinner. Cum up, Vi'let. When we gits awver-right thic next 'ump, we'll be nigh 'ome an' stable."

This novel is about the land. It reflects the changes in agricultural England from 1872 until the present day, as seen through the career of George Simmons. If these changes are but dimly seen it is because of the dialect which, reproduced with an utter faithfulness which should interest students of phonetics and the inhabitants of Wiltshire, is like a thick mist through which the reader, with moving lips and

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
CRIME OF VIOLENCE Rufus King (Crime Club: \$2.)	Wealthy N. Y'ker, with yen for young bride, shot in Manhattan mansion. Blackmailing valet later perishes in Easthampton. Lieut. Valcour obliges.	Loose diamond chip and "cadaveric spasm" figure largely in clever solution—and tale has more than usual amount of chipper chatter.	Streamlined
FULL FARE FOR THE CORPSE Tech Davis (Crime Club: \$2.)	Snowbound trans-continental train scene of several killings, considerable macabre festivity, and deft detecting by Aubrey Nash.	Wyoming peaks make good background for gruesome goings-on, people are well done (though too numerous), and plot is satisfactorily scrambled.	Highball
ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY E. Phillips Oppenheim Little, Brown: \$2.)	Ronald Matresser, apotheosis of all British lords, preserves peace of Europe by vanquishing wicked but somehow likable Prince Otto von Behrling.	Suavely thrilling yarn of international skulduggery, with murder, sniping, snooping, high-toned romance, and all the time-honored trappings.	In the groove
THE CASE OF THE CRAWLING COCKROACH Harlan Reed (Dutton: \$2.)	Passenger killed on liner from Orient to U. S. Dan Jordan, dipsomaniac dick, grudgingly agrees to locate the murderer.	Perhaps the bleariest-eyed murder yarn yet, with generally obnoxious characters and title that has nothing to do with the case.	Hang-over

eyes out of focus, vainly peers. Hardly anything is worth so much trouble.

George says:

"'Tis hrong! 'Tis hrong! Wotever be things comin' to? But there, 'tis allus the way wi' playin' varmers.

"An' what do 'ee mean be that, George? asked his wife, who had overheard her husband's mutterings.

"Oh, just that no man don't varm proper lest 'ee'm force put, me dear. Muster Padfield be a nice enough man, an' all that, an' 'ee've a treated I vair. But I knowed what 'twould be when 'ee come. 'Ee bain't a proper varmer. 'Ee'm a rich man's son. As long as times be good, sich volk do varm well, an' thur men han't got nothin' to grouse about. But when times be bad it do take a varmer as 'ave worked fur 'is 'aypence to struggle droo."

Mr. Street is sincere and is thoroughly familiar with his subject. He dedicates his book to "the agricultural labourer, the salt of England's earth" and he means it. The farmer is becoming the Noble Savage of this generation.

C. H. M.

LATE HARVEST. By Sibyl Croly Hanchett. New York: Speller. 1937. \$2.50.

This first novel by Mrs. Hanchett is concerned with the problem of a middle-aged woman who desires love and children but is unable to escape her barren, unhappy marriage to live with the young man who loves her. Sara Littlefield, her taciturn husband Adam, and the soulful young Leonard Worthy are involved in an interesting set of circumstances, yet they are never brought to life. We are asked to believe in these people, but neither the writing nor the thought makes us believe in them, since both are too immature for the revelation of such characters.

Mrs. Hanchett's writing is muffled in cotton batting which constantly keeps the reader from any living substance. Both the rhythms and the language of the conversations are unreal. The children talk like their elders, and the speech is fitting to neither. The dialogue of the supposedly clever Bohemians is particularly unfortunate, for it reminds one of nothing so much as a third-rate sophisticated movie exhibited on a double-bill. Like the people and their conversations the background of the small town of Littlefields is completely unconvincing. The story is laid in the 1890s, but only a few external remarks about Beardsley's drawings or Bryan's campaign supply the setting. The reader obtains no inner conviction of reality in any part of the novel.

J. D. H.

Sociology

STUDIES IN THE SCIENCE OF SOCIETY PRESENTED TO ALBERT GALLOWAY KELLER. Edited by George Peter Murdock. Yale University Press. 1937. \$6.

This *festschrift* was presented to Albert G. Keller "in celebration of his completion of thirty years as Professor of the Science of Society in Yale University." Professor Keller was the collaborator of William Graham Sumner, carrying to completion "The Science of Society," begun by Sumner. The twenty-six essays

which make up the "Studies" range in subject from The Majority Rule in Collective Bargaining to The Pre-Iroquoian Cultures of New York State, but all are within the fields of sociology and anthropology, all the authors were students of Professor Keller's, and all of them conceive of themselves as members of a tradition founded by Sumner. Some of the essays, indeed, are concerned with elaborating particular points in "The Science of Society." As is true of all *festschriften*, the quality of the essays is uneven, but the average standard is high, and the book does honor to Professor Keller. One particular value it has, that it draws our attention to the gaps in even our factual knowledge of human societies. A paper on "Indonesian Civilization" reminds us that we know much about the primitive cultures of Australia and Oceania, little about those of the wealthy and populous Dutch East Indies. Another on the Galician Ukrainians reminds us that we have studied too little the peasant cultures of Europe, the ancestors of our own civilization. There is much more to be done in "collecting cultures."

G. C. H.

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. Payment in full must be received ten days in advance of publication. Address Personal Dept., *Saturday Review*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.

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PERSONALS

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