

Everyone who went to college in the 'Twenties' . . .

Remember that girl whose dazzling beauty set her apart from all the other girls on the very first day of school? The one the sororities fell all over themselves in the rush to pledge? *We Pluck this Flower* recounts the adventures of a good-looking Iowa girl during the tumultuous Nineteen-Twenties. Here again we find the rapid style, the barbed humor, the lively characters and the all-embracing pity which made *O, Chautauqua* such a rich and joyous first novel.

We Pluck this Flower

By
Thomas W. Duncan

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The New Books

Fiction

THE SCANDALS OF CLOCHERLE.

By **Gabriel Chevallier**. Simon & Schuster. 1937. \$2.50.

Back of this book, as is so often the case with even more effervescent products of France, there lies a grave and hard reality. True to the traditions of Latin logic with which the French are so fond of crediting themselves, the author has not neglected to show that the amusing crescendo of events in his story is a result of no less a fact of history than the separation of Church and State. It all begins when the anti-clericals in a small wine-growing community install one of those public conveniences, so common in France and so hard to find in America, just outside the door of the village church.

M. Chevallier displays a good deal of wit and more high spirits in telling how this circumstance sets Clocherle on its collective ear, fatally disturbs several local romances, and starts several new ones when the military are brought into the district to keep the peace, and finally serves as excuse for the fall of another Ministry, which in turn disrupts another Disarmament Conference at Geneva. Having fun with the politicians is the author's forte. His book is never better than when it is exposing the complicated machinations which make an international crisis of a village row. For the rest, much of the very Palais-Royal-farce plot moves so fast that the reader remains unaware of the varying quality of separate episodes, and is only conscious at the end that a pretty lively time has been had by everyone concerned with Clocherle and the doings there. One or two passages come too close to cruelty to be

wholly pleasant. At some time in his career the author must have suffered severely at the hands of some spying old maid, for his portrait of Justine Putet, the cause of all the trouble, is positively savage. Her final insanity strikes the only definitely false note in the book.

Curiously, certain bourgeois sensibilities in supposedly unshockable France were seriously offended by this book, but it is probably picturesque enough and sufficiently "foreign" to enchant American readers who would be mad as all get out if it were laid in their own home town. Anyway, here is "Clocherle," a really funny book, very well translated, and all ready to send to the Europe-bound steamers to serve as the excellent guide-book to French wit that it is.

T. P., JR.

STRAW IN THE WIND. By **Ruth Linger Dobson**. Dodd, Mead. 1937. \$2.

This novel, the year's Hapwood prizewinner, should interest all those who are looking hopefully for an interpretation of the complete American scene by "regional" writers. Its locale is an Amish settlement in Indiana, where superstition and bigotry still survive, apparently wholly unaffected by the social forces which in the past two or three decades have so changed the farming picture of the rest of the Middle West.

The plot is the familiar one of the patriarchal tyrant who sacrifices wife, children, neighbors, and his own happiness in his greed for land and in the exploitation of his ego. It is largely the unfamiliar dialect and the folk superstitions that make it somehow different and keep your interest sustained to the end, even

(Continued on page 21)

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE STATE VS. ELNA JEPSON <i>Nancy Barr Mavity</i> (Doubleday, Doran: \$2.)	Nice girl who loved dangerously finds herself enmeshed in murder trial—and is the getting out difficult!	The crime lies before you, and in striking scenes you see how justice works—and almost comes a cropper.	Illuminating
THE MOON SAW MURDER <i>Gail Oliver</i> (Macmillan: \$2.)	Lots of people had reasons for killing Vashti Parr, but second murder, with complications, keeps police Capt. Ten Eyche on the run.	Nice problem, refined hotel atmosphere, any number of exciting blind alleys, and a plot that keeps you steadily guessing.	Well worked out
THE CANDLE <i>Linton C. Hopkins</i> (Green Circle: \$2.)	Innocent brass candlestick, secret formula, and potent red pellet cause several deaths, unsolved till interested party explains all.	General spookiness of yarn slightly shattered when reader knows what all the shootin's about, but suspense is well maintained.	Good
THE ANGER OF THE BELLS <i>Virginia Rath</i> (Crime Club: \$2.)	Sudden death smites three residents of Western ghost town but Rocky Allan and a friendly feline unmask the killer.	Unusual and interesting locale, some mild malapropish humor, sufficiency of "quaint" characters and red herrings—and clever solution.	Worth reading

The Compleat Collector

RARE BOOKS: CONDUCTED BY JOHN T. WINTERICH

*In alternate weeks this Department is devoted to Fine Printing
and is conducted by Carl Purington Rollins*

Chicago To Far Away

We present immediately below the text of a communication:

Sept. 28, 1879.

St. Thomas [de Jolliette, P.Q.]

Dear Sir

I received your letter. I cannot accept your las condition, I am sick five weeks ago then I cannot go to chicago it is to far away for an old person sick as I am.

I remain yours truly
ALEXIS ST. MARTIN

Apart from the Miltonic orthography, St. Martin's prose style is utterly lacking in distinctive nuances. True, he adheres admirably to the Wellingtonian formula for adequate expression: "Have something to say. Say it." It is obvious that, unlike Père Dionne two generations later, he did not go to Chicago.

What of it? Why dignify his senile querulousness with a facsimile frontispiece in a brochure carrying the dignified imprint of the William L. Clements Library in the University of Michigan? Why entitle the brochure itself "Four Letters of Alexis St. Martin"?

Now one either knows precisely who Alexis St. Martin was or one has not the slightest idea. It is the Compleat Collector's business to know things like this, because St. Martin, without being the author of it, was the *fons et origo* of a classic in the history of American, nay of universal medicine—William Beaumont's "Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion" (Plattsburgh, New York, 1833).

St. Martin rode to fame (and barely stopped short of immediate eternity) on an accidental shot-gun discharge that tore into his left side and inflicted a terrible wound. This was on June 6, 1822, when he was nineteen years old—the place, Fort Mackinac, Michigan.

His desperate predicament made possible a series of experiments that have had more to do with our own physical well-being than the electric light or the gasoline engine or Mr. Pitkin. The story is available in the late Dr. Victor C. Vaughan's account of Beaumont (St. Martin's attending physician) in the Dictionary of American Biography.

Beaumont died in 1853 at the age of sixty-seven. His prize patient survived him thirty years, dying at eighty and mourned by seventeen children. His family, fearful of the post-mortem temptation which he offered to science, buried him eight feet deep.

The four St. Martin letters described in the Clements Library pamphlet are the gift of Dr. Frederick Collier, director of the department of surgery in the University of Michigan. They disclose the fact that in 1879 the Rush Medical College of Chicago tried to induce St. Martin to submit to further experiments. He agreed to go to Chicago if a son could accompany him, but a contract sent him by the college authorities omitted this

condition. St. Martin returned it unsigned. The college must then have communicated with him again, although their reply is lost, and the postal of September 28, 1879, textually reproduced above, was the response. St. Martin would stomach no more. Can we euphetics blame him?

Some recent catalogue citations: James F. Drake, Inc., 24 West 40th St., New York: "The Education of Henry Adams," Washington, 1907, \$450; Cather's "My Antonia," Boston, 1918, contemporary presentation copy, \$175; Dreiser's "Sister Carrie," New York, 1900, \$200; William H. Robinson, Ltd., 16 Pall Mall, London; the fourth printed and first dated Bible

(Mainz: Fust and Schoeffer, 1462), £450; Richardson's "Pamela," London, 1741-2, £800; Collector's Bookshop, 37 West 47th Street, New York: Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Oak and Ivy," Dayton, 1893, \$25; Robinson's "The Torrent and the Night Before," Gardiner, Maine, 1896, presentation, \$300; Santayana's "Sonnets," 1894, two copies in variant bindings, \$25; Dauber & Pine, 66 Fifth Ave., New York: Kipling's "Letter . . . on a Possible source of The Tempest," Providence, 1906, \$185; Charles P. Everitt, 856 Lexington Ave., New York: Shillibee's "Narrative of The Briton's Voyage to Pitcairn's Island," London, 1817, \$12.50; Stanley O. Bezanson, 1 Court St., Boston: Voltaire's "Letters Concerning the English Nation," London, 1733, \$35; C. A. Stonehill, Jr., 26 Museum St., London: Bullen's "Cruise of the Cachalot," London, 1898, the dedication copy, £85; Frank Hollings, 7 Great Turnstile, Holborn, London: William Caslon's first type-specimen sheet, London, about 1730, £6 6s.

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