

WORDS

"The noblest quarry of the sportsman! To follow their spoor through the jungles and champaigns of the English language; to flush them from their hiding places in dense thickets of Chaucer or Spenser, track them through the noble aisles of Shakespeare forest and find them at last perching gaily on the branches of O. Henry or George Ade! . . . What exhilaration compared to the bliss of pursuing through a thousand dictionary pages some Wild Word We Have Known, and occasionally discovering an unfamiliar creature of strange and dazzling plumage?"

Quoted, by permission, from
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The New Books

Belles-Lettres

BREAKING INTO PRINT. Simon & Schuster. 1937. \$2.75.

Any book that Elmer Adler has anything to do with is sure to be a pleasure to the eye, and he is the editor of this compilation of papers in which each of a select group of authors tells of the difficulties of authorship and how such trials are met, also about their first published work. Mr. Adler has added biographical notes and comment. The authors are as follows, as they appear alphabetically in the volume: Sherwood Anderson, Robert Benchley, Stephen Vincent Benét, Pearl Buck, James Branch Cabell, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, A. E. Coppard, Theodore Dreiser, Joseph Hergesheimer, Robinson Jeffers, MacKinlay Kantor, Rockwell Kent, Sinclair Lewis, William McFee, H. L. Mencken, Christopher Morley, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Carl Van Vechten, Hugh Walpole, and Edith Wharton. A good variety!

The accounts are all characteristic of their writers, and it would be invidious to single out any above the others. It seems to this reviewer that even in the dark, with both hands tied behind him, he could pass a test as to who wrote which. And all are of interest and value to anyone interested in the craft of writing. Neophytes should take heart at some of the tribulations recounted. Any lover of literature will be glad to have on his library shelves such intimate talk from those with the gift of words, with in most cases samples of how their pages look before they go to the printer. If nothing very profound is said, there is plenty of evidence that good writers have a sense of humor. All in all, a successful experiment.

W. R. B.

Biography

THE MAKING OF A SCIENTIST. By Raymond L. Ditmars. Macmillan. 1937. \$2.75.

This is a series of adventures in the author's life from boyhood to the present, and ranging from a gilded horse atop a livery stable to the study of snowstorms and hurricanes; from the first amateur collection of snakes and frogs to the professional collection of rattlers in Florida, horned-toads in California, the fer-de-lance, bushmaster, and giant bat in Martinique, Grenada, and Trinidad. To maintain a representative and healthy collection of animals at all times, and occasionally to be able to exhibit rare specimens, do not complete the job of the Curator of Mammals and Reptiles at a great zoo which has three million visitors annually. It is generally recognized that such positions should provide for and be occupied by men capable of adding to the substance of science by taking fullest advantage of the unusual opportunities. It has ever been a matter of gratification to his scientific colleagues that Dr. Ditmars's interests penetrate beyond his nominal responsibilities, to the

authoritative descriptions of the native life, the correct zoological relationships and the finer aspects of the nutrition and psychology of his captives. This is a book about a "scientist's good times, and some of his disappointments." If it is episodic it is perhaps because he wishes to emphasize that his interests have been multiple, a fact which has added considerably to his zest for life. The book points no moral, but it should stimulate some youngsters to emulate his example, and some adults to give a thought to what goes on in the offices and laboratories which they do not see when visiting the Zoo.

H. W. S.

TAKING CHANCES. By Neal Harman. Farrar & Rinehart. 1937. \$2.50.

If Daniel Defoe had lived the life of Neal Harman he might have written some such autobiography as "Taking Chances." A strong flavor of "Moll Flanders" invests its pages. This is not altogether a compliment. It has been said of Defoe that he was a dime-novelist at his lowest, a genius at his best—and one would not attribute genius to Mr. Harman.

The initial trouble with Neal Harman's career, which he regards as a failure, was his father's eagerness to make a gentleman of him. The son revolted against gentility and, at the age of sixteen, made off for America to take his chances, which he took apparently without realizing them. A series of hairbreadth escapes was the result. After a year or two of complete degradation, which he regards in retrospect as the best period of his life, he returned to England and got a job with a movie-making expedition outward bound for Burma. In the East he became involved in some blood-curdling oriental intrigue (the story of Fenton and the poisoned brandy sounds too true to melodrama to be true to life), and from there he went to South Africa, where his narrative ends amid native drums, charging elephants, and man-killing lions, in the approved manner of a former school of African-adventure writers.

Mr. Harman's writing is appealing in its great simplicity. One can forgive his introducing unconvincing incidents, and characters who "hiss imprecations" and utter "horrid curses," because of the ingenuous nature he reveals on every page of his book.

L. J. H., Jr.

EGERTON RYERSON: His Life and Letters. By C. B. Sissons. Vol. I. Oxford University Press. 1937. \$8.50.

From time to time news despatches from Loyalist Spain carry some mention of the Papineau-MacKenzie Battalion, a few hundred Canadian volunteers fighting with the International Brigade. The name of their unit memorializes another struggle for democracy which took place in Upper and Lower Canada exactly one hundred years ago, when the French-Canadian Papineau and the Scotch Canadian

(Continued on page 22)

Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

WE are properly reproached (by Helen Lowitt of the Magic Circle Book Shop, Great Neck, L. I.) for having forgotten that Mr. Asa Don Dickinson, formerly at the University of Pennsylvania, is now librarian of Brooklyn College. Unluckily, Old Q. is particularly prolific in such lapses just after a vacation: it seems as though, during any absence from toil, he forgets everything he ever knew. He has had a notion lately to apply himself to the *Analects of Confucius*, added this year to the World's Classics series (80 cents). Confucius, if anyone, might hammer into us a little sense: we learn from Lady Hosie's introduction that the Sage's teaching was so absorbing that a jealous rival of his employer had to send 80 singing-girls and 120 thoroughbred horses to distract the Duke from his lessons.

Q. has only studied one of the W. P. A. State Guides, the *Vermont* (Houghton Mifflin, \$2.50) but he finds it admirable, full of rich matter, excellently arranged and temptingly illustrated. The photograph of stump fences near Vergennes makes him hanker to get on the road again; and how excellent to be reminded of the legend (forgotten since boyhood) of the phantom steamboat on Lake Morey at Fairlee, Vt. There, where Samuel Morey was said to have invented a steamboat some years before Fulton, a ghostly Spensterschiff is said to frighten sentimental canoeists on nights of moon and mist. We cannot testify pro or con, but well remember that in the year 1908 we saw a waterspout on Lake Morey and

were very much alarmed. Brooklyn has another child poet, Katharine Carrasso, aged 13, whose second book *Crystal Arabesques* is now announced by the Biography Press. Whenever we travel on trains we always see yellow box-cars lettered SRL which startles us for a moment until we realize it's Swift's Refrigerator Line. The Business Department reminds us that next week's Autumn Book Number is an excellent time to renew or make sure of a regular SRL subscription. Having made a good many errors ourself, it is pleasant to chide John G. Kidd, eminent bookseller of Cincinnati, for his telegram to Simon and Schuster (facsimiled in *Publishers' Weekly*) describing Van Loon's *The Arts* as a "magnus opus." In the latest announcements of the Cambridge University Press (represented in U.S.A. by Macmillan) we find *The Meaning of Prestige* by Harold Nicolson (75c). This was the Rede Lecture at Cambridge last spring: it is "a comparative study of the political thinking of the European powers" and asks some highly provocative questions. The Cambridge University Press, by the way, is building new and larger quarters for its London offices; and also ejaculates with pride that its ancient building in Cambridge has been cleaned and mended—"and a lift installed." Houghton Mifflin announce that in this month will appear the Autograph Edition of the novels and stories of Willa Cather; designed by Bruce Rogers and limited to 950 signed and numbered sets, for sale by subscription.

The AMEN CORNER

"... one man in his time plays many parts. . . ."

This is the motto which Jack Jones has chosen for the title-page of his remarkable autobiography, *Unfinished Journey*, which the Oxford University Press published on Thursday, and every word of which we have read with astonished pleasure.

We were astonished at the sheer virtuosity of his style. It is almost as though he were playing his life story on some exceptionally flexible instrument, so varied, so subtle, so exactly suited to each scene, to each stage of his life is the language in which he tells it. There is also a peculiar kind of relish for the fluidity of language itself which we have never met anywhere else except in James Joyce.

It is this gift which is also responsible for the most remarkable feature of Jack Jones's career. He has been a professional speaker for almost every political party in England—first for the Socialists and then the newly-formed Labour party, then for the Communists, then for the Lloyd George Liberals (Mr. Lloyd George writes the Preface to the book), then for Moseley's Fascists. After this he retired in disgust to the Rhondda Valley in Wales, where he was born and brought up in a mining community, and wrote a novel, and this autobiography, on relief.

His description of life in a coal-miner's family, and of the members of the family themselves, is unforgettable. The sincerity of his account of his experiences in the Boer War and the Great War is amazing. His case-history in the study of post-war unemployment is of universal interest as a contemporary social document.

Another autobiography on the Oxford list which is as interesting in its own way as a post-war document is *Growing Pains* by Basil Harvey, which, says the *New York Herald Tribune* Books, "boasts a less assertive cleverness than some of the other personal records of its kind, but it is one of the best of them, just the same. It has a palpable sincerity and a bright detachment that give it a special quality of its own. And Basil Harvey's life story, as he tells it at the age of twenty-eight, is interesting. What gives this autobiography a particular interest is a simplicity, concreteness, and power of detachment which one does not expect to find in a book of this sort. This young author does not indulge in social generalizations . . . He really makes pictures which arouse their own thoughts."

Autobiography reminds us of a new volume in the Phaidon Art Books series, that "revolution in art publishing," which the Oxford Press is publishing in this country, *Five Hundred Self-Portraits*, Chosen, Edited and Introduced by Ludwig Goldscheider. Mr. Royal Cortissoz says (also in *Books*): "At rare intervals there comes to an author the opportunity to exploit a field which no one before him has ever touched. This is the good fortune that has befallen Mr. Goldscheider and he has rise to the occasion. His 'Five Hundred Self-Portraits' is an enchanting book and the full-page illustrations of which it is mostly made have been perfectly printed, some of them in colors. I don't see how artists, students and art lovers generally can quite get along without it, for it constitutes a living gallery of the masters, each of them gazing directly at us across the gulf of time."

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The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
SEARCH FOR MY GREAT UNCLE'S HEAD Peter Coffin (Crime Club: \$2.)	Prim professor of English visiting rich and eccentric uncle in secluded estate encounters antagonistic cousins, two decapitations, continuous excitement.	Grisly crimes can't subdue hilarity of richly plotted tale with satisfying love-interest, beaucoup thrills, and crazily effective sleuthing.	Extra Good
DEATH AT THE INN R. Austin Freeman (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Young banker relates two cases of sudden death (pp. 1-129); old friend Christopher Jervis narrates Dr. Thorndyke's brilliant solution (pp. 129-312).	Freeman is unrivaled since Conan Doyle in evocation of London atmosphere and niceties of scientific detection, but he needs a new plot.	By all means
THE CASE OF THE SEVEN OF CALVARY Anthony Boucher (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	Vengeance of esoteric Swiss secretaries seen in two California killings—but Prof. Ashwin unscrews the inscrutable.	Occasionally top-heavy erudition offset by scandalous collegiate goings-on, rapid-fire dialogue, and a puzzling plot.	Zestful
THE WEDDING NIGHT MURDER Christopher Bush (Holt: \$2.)	Lovely but wicked Anglo-Russian slain on bridal night. Suspicion points to elderly hubby, but Ludo Travers scents red herring.	Main murder motive somewhat beclouded by secondary robbery theme and Travers bluffs a bit too much in spectacular solution.	Agreeable