

The New Books

Fiction

SKIN DEEP. By Clarence Budington Kelland. Harpers. 1939. \$2.

Mr. Kelland's favorite type of hero is the pedantic, osseous young scholar who appears to be remote from mundane realities but actually possesses considerable presence of mind, cunning, physical strength, and nerve. In the present instance the hero, Bertram Erasmus Dill-some, is an astronomer who inherits a national beauty parlor chain from his aunt. The business is threatened by several faithless colleagues of the deceased aunt, who are boring from within. Dill-some with the help of a young lady ferrets out the conspiracy, brings the faithless employees to justice, and marries the girl. In spite of repeating a familiar formula Mr. Kelland manages to write an uproarious book. You will finish reading it very quickly and you will find you have been laughing immoderately most of the time.

R. S.

THE YOUNGER VENUS. By Naomi Royde Smith. Macmillan. 1939. \$2.50.

This is a fragile, sentimental tale which, although somewhat streamlined, is strongly reminiscent of the innocent love stories of the nineties. When the story opens, Mrs. Adderly and her two daughters are departing for a year on the continent, having rented their quiet Devonshire home to Anthony Frome, young writer and art critic, and a specialist in the Botticelli school. Susan, the younger daughter, is to all appearances the physical reincarnation of the Botticelli Venus, although she doesn't suspect it until halfway through the book. And we are not too surprised that Frome looks like a twentieth century edition of Simonetta's ardent lover, Giuliano de' Medici. How Frome, embittered toward all modern women because of a recent

infatuation with a heartless actress, falls in love with Susan's photograph, and how Susan rescues the lost Botticelli drawings and thus removes the mist that beclouds his fair name, make up the thin plot. But the novel is rescued from banality by the author's deft characterizations and her indubitable skill. This reviewer must confess that it seemed as unrelated to life as lived in 1939 as are the novels of "the Duchess," but we are sure that day-dreaming adolescents of all ages will find it tender and charming, and to these we recommend it, the more confidently because of its finished dialogue and careful writing.

M. S. U.

History

AMERICA SAILS THE SEAS. The History and Romance of America on the High Seas from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century. By Frank C. Bowen. McBride. 1938. \$3.75.

This volume shares the merits and defects of most of Mr. Bowen's earlier volumes, which total at least fourteen. Its chief value lies in enabling the reader to acquire some 170 full-page marine prints at a cost of little more than two cents apiece. These are for the most part selected from the extensive and magnificent collection of A. G. H. Macpherson, which is without a rival in the marine field. The pictures, chosen with discrimination, give an admirable visual idea of the development of shipping from Vik-

ing boats to the crack vessels of the later nineteenth century.

As for the text, a boy of fifteen, or an adult reader uninitiated in sea lore, will doubtless find it a pleasant and comprehensive introduction to the subject. It adds comparatively little to the already available knowledge, however, being apparently based largely upon existing works rather than upon original research. Mr. Bowen presents a readable survey of seagoing activity which affected America from the pre-Columbian discoveries down to fairly modern times. Those better acquainted with maritime history, on the other hand, may be concerned over the occasional omissions and errors.

The four-page bibliography, designed "merely as a guide for those who want to go a little more deeply into the subject," contains scarcely a title published since 1925 and does not seem primarily designed for a work on American maritime history. With all its shortcomings, the book remains an interesting survey of the doings of warships, privateers, and merchantmen, illustrated in an admirable manner.

R. G. A.

CALIFORNIA IN 1792: THE EXPEDITION OF JOSÉ LONGINOS MARTÍNEZ. Translated by Lesley Byrd Simpson. San Marino, Cal.: Huntington Library Publications. 1938. \$2.75.

The journal of the naturalist Longinos contains comments upon the flora, fauna, and other natural phenomena of the two Californias. Of principal interest are his comments upon the life of the Indians,

(Continued on page 22)

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE AFFAIR AT THE GROTT <i>Esther Havens Fonseca</i> (Crime Club: \$2.)	Two doctors slain at Wisconsin health resort. Mike Lindquist, Scandinavian sleuth, despite amateur hindrances, catches killer.	A bit top-heavy with plot, but people are odd and interesting, winter scenery invigorating, and finish both surprising and logical.	Good
THE NATION'S MISSING GUEST <i>Hulbert Footner</i> (Harpers: \$2.)	Sultan of tiny British protectorate visits America and is killed on train. Lee Mappin thwarts guileful Moslems and spots slayer.	Palace intrigues of vengeful Orientals on American soil, vanishing jewels, pleasant romances, action to burn, acceptable sleuthing.	Agreeable
EVEN DOCTORS DIE <i>Lindsay Ansow</i> (Crime Club: \$2.)	London reporter aids ill American girl on street. Five deaths follow, all solved—with police help—by sprightly pressman.	Opening chapters and finish pack considerable punch but intervening matter is cloudy and often soggy with Grade Z British humor.	Has its points
TELL DEATH TO WAIT <i>Anita Boutell</i> (Putnam: \$2.)	Caustic lady book-reviewer falls to death at party in mist-enveloped Cotswold cottage. Bosom friend has her ideas about "accident."	Fever-heated emotions, tangled lives of various characters, and tragedy-laden atmosphere beautifully handled—but fog gets into plot.	Tense
THEY HANG THEM IN GIBRALTAR <i>Barry Perowne</i> (Hillman-Curl: \$2.)	Raffles, redivivus again, "by permission of estate, etc.," escapes cops as usual in series of adventures on Gibraltar.	Ingenious and reasonably exciting crook stuff, with wraith of old Gentleman Cracksmen going through motions.	Ho hum!

HARPER

Prize Novel

Contest

Manuscripts may now be submitted for the Harper Prize Novel Contest. The final date for submission is January 31, 1939. A circular giving full details of the contest and the prize will be mailed free on request.

HARPER & BROTHERS
49 East 33rd Street New York

Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

WE always remind our readers that January 20 is St. Agnes Eve; the right time to read Keats, whose *Eve of St. Agnes* is 120 years old this year. The first volume of Scribners' new Hampstead Edition of Keats (to be complete in 8 volumes) is now ready; this notable set crowns the achievement of the editors, the two Buxton Formans (father and son) whose labors in honor of the poet have continued through more than half a century. A unique feature of this set is Miss Naomi Kirk's biographical sketch of the poet's brother George Keats who came to America and became (says Scribners' announcement) "the first millionaire of Louisville, Kentucky." Tennyson's poem on the theme of St. Agnes Eve is not often remembered; but we recall it from boyhood in the old Houghton Mifflin Household Edition (1899) of Lord Tennyson; there it is illustrated by a drawing of the nun, in her nightgown, standing in a very draughty stone turret and ecstasizing (at an open window) on the snowy landscape. Accurate to the text, with good old Houghton Mifflin fidelity the artist shows the lady's breath vaporized by chill; her prayer for heaven would soon be answered (we felt sure) by pneumonia. We hope Houghton Mifflin know how grateful we still are for their solid editions of the classics, on which most of our generation were raised. They, with Chapman & Hall, Macmillan, and Ginn, were the first publishers' names that became actual to our young mind. John Winterich in his admirable *23 Books & the Stories Behind Them* reminds us that the Philadelphia edition of Keats (Grigg & Elliott, 1832) preceded the first English collected edition by 8 years.

John Crowe Ransom, in the first issue of his vigorous *Kenyon Review* (quarterly, at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio) remarks that "there was a streak of laziness in Shakespeare." Ditto in Old Pusillanimous Quercus, who admits himself unable to answer most of the inquiries for further information about this and that. The proper destination for such inquiries is an intelligent bookseller; if the bookseller you consult has no gumption for answering questions, move your trade to another. Professor Ransom continues (editorializing about Shakespeare) with the perilous suggestion that Shakespeare might have shown more "philosophical pattern" if he had worked his way through college. In spite of the general American idea that Working One's Way Through College is a noble achievement, those who went through at someone else's expense probably got more out of it. In college is the place to discover and caress the creative streak of laziness—that is, the wise reluctance to fall at once into pattern—which Mr. Ransom has accurately noticed in our Argentine Swan. The Collectors' Bookshop (37 West 47) in its second catalogue of First Books by American Authors lists a copy of John

Ransom's *Poems About God* (1919) at \$17.50. Among other desirable literary chrysalises the Collectors' Bookshop has ferreted out *Yale Verse* (1909) with six poems by "Harry S. Lewis" and one by "H. Sinclair Lewis"; *Dream Drops*, printed for Amy Lowell at the age of 13; Edna Millay's baccalaureate hymn for Vassar College in June, 1917; and Alexander Woolcott's *Mrs. Fiske* (1917) in which to the author's dismay his name was misspelled on the title-page. We thank Nat Olds, in that gay weekly *The Villager* (Greenwich Village, N. Y. C.) for reminding us of the immortal notice once posted in the reading room of the Boston Public Library: *Nothing but low conversation allowed in this room.*

Among the guests of honor at the 7th annual luncheon of Southern Authors, to be held at the Park Lane Hotel on January 28, will be Hulbert Footner. His *More Than Bread*, an unusually candid novel of southern Maryland—a region mostly untitled by pen—is one of the books chosen for homage by the Southern Women's National Organization. The University of Pennsylvania Press announces the sixth volume in the series sponsored by the Rosenbach Fellowship in Bibliography. It is *Three Americanists*, by Randolph G. Adams, director of the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. Norman Dodge, the ratiocinating editor of *The Month at Goodspeed's* (Boston) has been checking up the diaries of George Washington for the Founding Father's luck at cards. 1772-75, G. W. lost £78/5/9 and won £72/2/6. This year's applications for Houghton Mifflin Fellowships must be filed with the H. M. Co. at 2 Park St., Boston, by April 1. These fellowships carry \$1,000 above royalties to "promising writers to aid them in completing projected books."

In a pleasant but too brief visit to the campus of the University of Wisconsin, Old Q. found the University Press justifiably proud and happy over a delightful book it has just published, *Science in a Tavern*, by Dean Emeritus Charles S. Slichter of the Graduate School. This is a collection of pungent and informal papers on scientific topics; the title-essay deals with the origin of the Royal Society which began as a tavern convivium of heavy eaters and hard drinkers, nearly three centuries ago. Dean Slichter says in his preface that he "began life on the staff of an American institution when its students numbered about three hundred, and served it half a century until the attendance rose to ten thousand or more. It was life in an expanding universe." Another unusual little book, kindly given us by Gilbert Doane of the University of Wisconsin Library, is *Alice in Viruland*, in which Dr. Paul F. Clark, professor of bacteriology, was courageous enough to give the presidential address to a scientific society in the form of a witty and very suggestive parody of Lewis Carroll's fable. Science is never so instructive as when it lets down its hair.

The Literary Life and the Hell with It
BY WHIT BURNETT
Co-founder and Co-editor of "STORY"
A DELIGHTFUL book of comment about our literary idols and would-be idols by one who knows them all too well. "This book combines the best features of Walter Winchell, Mark Twain and Gertrude Stein."—*Lewis Gannett*. "The bed book of the year, better than bundling and lots more fun."—*Frank Scully*. A Story Press Book
With Drawings by LUDWIG BEMELMANS
\$2.50 HARPER'S

Hoicks!
WHAT A BOOK!
THE SWORD IN THE STONE
By T. H. WHITE
"Utterly delightful . . . get a copy and keep it; you may very likely find that you possess a classic."—*Saturday Review*. Book-of-the-Month Club Selection. At all book-sellers. \$2.50
141st THOUSAND!
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

THE NATURE WRITERS A Guide to Richer Reading HERBERT FAULKNER WEST

An informal and descriptive compilation of 260 books about nature, indispensable to librarians, students and to the reader who would keep his perspective in the welter of available books. By the author of *Book Collecting for the Impecunious Amateur*. \$2.00

STEPHEN DAYE PRESS, Brattleboro, Vt.