

Bibliophile's Pilgrimage

A BOOKSELLER LOOKS BACK. By J. S. Bain. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1940. 304 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by R. ELLIS ROBERTS

ONCE sold a book to Bernard Quaritch, and saw—I was a school-boy—the great man himself. I have met and had generous dealings with Gabriel Wells (he once astounded and delighted me by, after giving me a good price for a book, sending a further check), and once, long, long ago, finding myself penniless on a Saturday afternoon, with two young friends to entertain, at St. Giles's Fair at Oxford, I borrowed two pounds from B. H. Blackwell. For me a bookseller is a sacred person—or, rather, exercises a sacred office. Towards publishers I cherish no feelings save what authors do cherish towards publishers. Printers, even when I am correcting proof, are benign and blessed persons; and booksellers rank, by me, with vintners, the guest masters of hospitable religious orders, and the great cooks of the world. That is why I would collect all bad booksellers in a bundle of esparto grass and have then auctioned off to city governments as refuse collectors. A bad bookseller is one who treats books as packages or razor-blades, who calls magazines "books," and tries to sell "Wuthering Heights" or "David Copperfield" by loudly proclaiming, "This is the book of the Movie."

How unapproachably civilized, how blandly cultured, how intelligently amiable are good booksellers can be read in this excellent book of Mr. Bain's. I have only one complaint against it, and that I expect is unfair. I should have liked a little more about some other booksellers, of London and elsewhere, in the period his volume covers. He looks back from today and Hugh Walpole—who introduces the volume charmingly—to 1816 and Robert Peel. You see, a bookseller has long sight, and can see clearly events and people long before he was born: and J. S. Bain lets us look back with him to the days of Disraeli, of Thackeray, of Charles Keene, of Palgrave of the "Golden Treasury" and his less urbane brother, of Gladstone, of Edmund Gosse, of FitzGerald, and several well-known Americans, Brander Matthews, Will Bonbright, Francis Bayard, Pierpont Morgan, John Hay, Henry James, Cabot Lodge, Mrs. Cadwalader Jones (Edith Wharton's sister), and George Allison Armour. Of this last Mr. Bain tells a pleasant anecdote. Mr. Allison Armour was not connected with the great packing firm of his city: and almost everyone he met assumed he

was. "I daren't," he exclaimed, "ask for a coat of arms, because I am sure I should be granted as crest 'a hog in armour.'"

Mr. Bain's house has always been a West-End firm—most of its years spent in the Haymarket. The other great Mayfair booksellers more or less contemporary were Sotheran, Pickering, Hatchard, Quaritch, Maggs, Ellis, and Elvey. Each of these shops had or has its particular atmosphere, and catered for different kinds of collectors. I think most book-lovers would agree that the best two for the general collector (who might, did unexpected fortunes accrue to him, also satisfy extravagant and particular tastes) were and are Sotheran and Bain.

And now Mr. Bain has written a book which will be read with delight by all who love to browse and buy in bookshops. Here is a readable, anecdotal account of a great bookshop's history: and now that it is hard for Americans to visit London, what better substitute for a bibliophile's pilgrimage could there be than this voyage with three generations of Bains?

Backstage in Medicine

BEHIND THE SURGEON'S MASK.

By James Harpole. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1940. 308 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH, M.D.

MEDICAL men may like to think of their profession as an art, but fortunately most of them rarely show signs of artistic temperament and go about their jobs with a methodical matter-of-factness, often a little puzzled when writers, De Kruif for example, get into a dither about them. Nevertheless an increasing number spend their leisure in painting, carving, playing an instrument, writing—and this may or may not mean something. On Harley Street (all medical men in Great Britain's literature live on Harley Street, even as in ours all big bankers hail from Wall Street) they seem to write books as easily as they do prescriptions. A surprising number have become authors of detective stories. Among these, James Harpole, *nom de plume* we are told, of an "eminent Harley Street surgeon." But Surgeon Harpole has also the spirit of the crusading pedagogue. He is convinced that if the public be taken behind the curtain they will be less frightened and befuddled by the medical show, and so in three books now he has been taking his readers on conducted tours backstage. For these he has developed a technique of personal-

izing and dramatizing disease which makes the information he would impart slip down as easily as a chocolate flavored tablet, and which owes much I am sure to his detective story training.

Other doctors have told stories from their case files but in most instances the "cases" merely confirm the point of the lesson. Surgeon Harpole uses each case as a springboard for a complete human interest story, a story in which clever characterization, natural dialogue, and a rapid build-up of suspense, holds the reader so firmly that unless he is a purist or an incorrigible skipper, he will accept without a murmur the accompanying medical information. Mr. and Mrs. Phillips struggling to retain their marital happiness now threatened by her hyperthyroidism, fear, then agree to, an operation. We listen in on their unhappy discussions, follow to the operating room to watch the major part of the gland removed, share the husband's agony when complications arise, witness with relief the united and now happy pair. Percival Wright, the bank clerk, becomes a blood donor, and we learn all about him as a person as well as about blood transfusion. Mrs. Heathcote's fracture, treated by the most modern methods is complicated by chronic alcoholism, but we see her cured by love and a modified psychoanalysis. And so on until we have shared in the emotions of a number of interesting people as they confront their most dramatic crises, the while we have acquired a surprising amount of information.

Doctors may cavil at the almost one hundred percent record of cures, readers who like theirs straight may find the mixture of science and sentiment more irritating than stimulating. But "Behind the Surgeon's Mask" was not written for these. It was written for the far larger public that loves a good yarn, and also loves to "keep informed," the public that cares not a tittle whether the medical profession calls itself art or science so long as it becomes a better and better stage director in the drama of life and death.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 330)

WM. BLAKE:

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

At length, trembling, the vision . . .
whispered:

. . . "God, so long worshipped, de-
parts as a lamp

Without oil; . . . a curse is heard
hoarse thro' the land from a
godless race

Descending to beasts; they look
downward and labor and for-
get my holy law."

Adventures on the Plains

TIXIER'S TRAVELS ON THE OSAGE PRAIRIES. Edited by John Francis McDermott. Translated from the French by Albert J. Salvan. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1940. 309 pp., with index. \$3.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

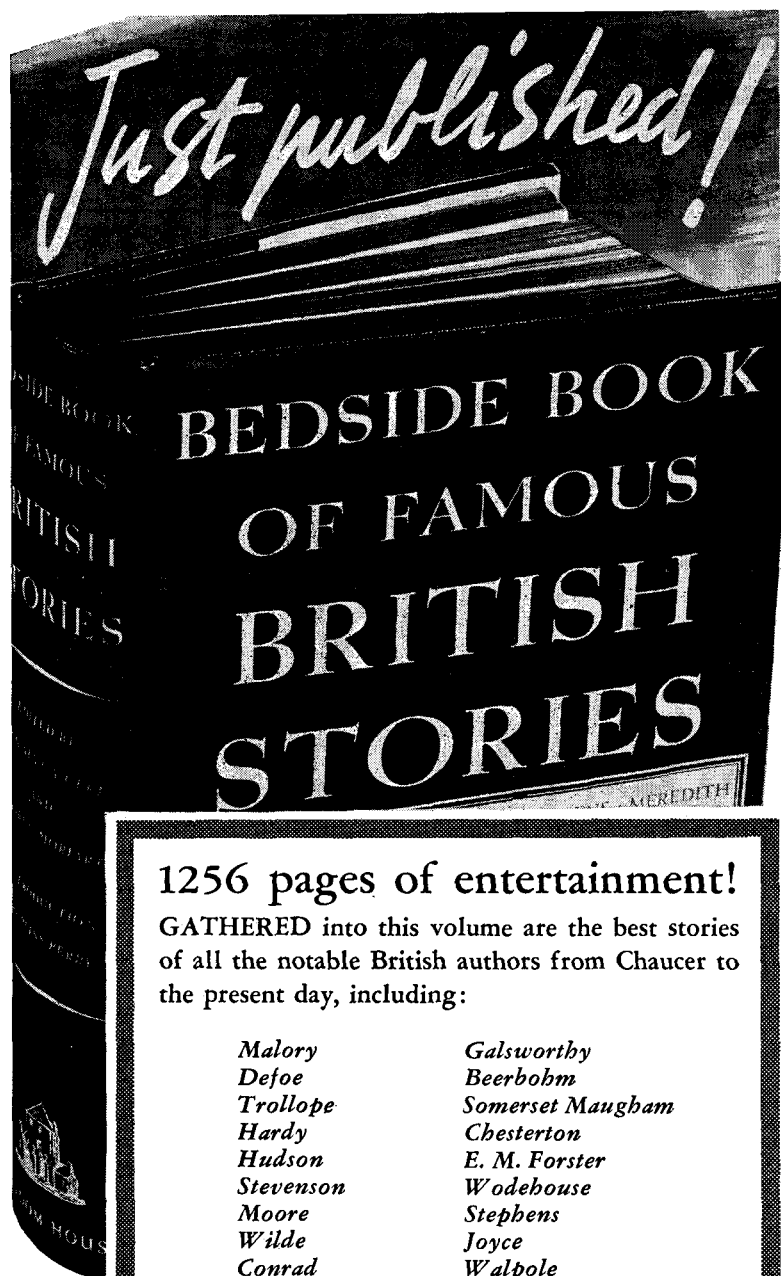
"MANY a French scalp has dried in front of the Osage wigwams," writes Victor Tixier to impress his Parisian readers. An adventurous young doctor and artist, fired no doubt by Cooper and Chateaubriand, he journeyed to our wild West in 1840 to join the Osage in their summer buffalo hunt. He looked for "new terrible thrills, to find death perhaps." Journeying from New Orleans up the Mississippi to St. Louis, he rode a pony to join the tribe, then ranging the plains of Kansas and Oklahoma, and fighting with the Pawnee. Alas, he met no hairbreadth escapes, and did not see a scalp lifted or even a grizzly slain.

But he did accumulate material for a most interesting and illuminating book, which falls into two parts. The introductory chapters give a vivid and attractive picture of the plantations of Creole Louisiana, where Tixier was overwhelmed with hospitality, and where he made many amusing observations on slavery, alligators, sugar-cultivation, steamboats, river floods, Southern diet and medicine, and not least of all, the ladies. The main body of the book then treats of the "dangerous" Osage. Tixier hunted with them, ate their bad food, inquired into their religion, watched their wardances, healed their sick, and in fact with curious eye, nose, and ear found out all about them. He was a sympathetic observer, thought the Indians "great philosophers," and deemed their life superior in some ways to that of the white race. His enthusiastic yet fairly scientific book, extremely rare in French, deserved this revival in an English translation, illustrated by his own sketches. Both editor and translator have done their work admirably.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*.
2. Shelley: *The Cloud*.
3. Milton: *Paradise Lost*.
4. Alfred Noyes: *The Highwayman*.
5. Coleridge: *The Ancient Mariner*.
6. Walter de la Mare: *Silver*.
7. Fitzgerald: *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.
8. Longfellow: *Christus*.
9. Keats: *Endymion*.
10. Rossetti: *The Blessed Damozel*.

JULY 27, 1940



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