

# THE NEW BOOKS

## Art

**YEARS OF ART: The Story of the Art Students League of New York.** By Marchal E. Landgren. McBride: 1940. 367 pp., with index. \$4.50.

In 1875, the facilities of the old National Academy Schools being insufficient to meet the needs of many aspirants in the fine arts, a group of students and artists founded a voluntary, coöperative school which soon assumed the title The Art Students League.

It was a school of an unprecedented sort. The members, artists and students, financed it and chose the instructors. That meant, that save as very exceptionally some aggressive

teacher dominated the work, teachers of most various styles and tendencies worked amicably side by side. Nothing like an orthodoxy was ever developed.

The novel plan worked admirably. Students crowded the studios. Teachers came and went, a few of rare zeal and capacity, such as Chase, Henri, and Du Mond, fortunately still active at the League, carried on for years. Probably a good majority of our best painters and sculptors have at some time or other and in one way or another been connected with the League.

In the limited space of a small book of which more than half the pages are devoted to illustration, only a brief and factual record is possible. This is fully given, and it is useful for reference. The flavor of this eminently liberal enterprise has in the main to be read between the lines and divined from the illustrations.

F. J. M., Jr.

## Fiction

**A TRAVELER IN TIME.** By Alison Uttley. Putnam. 1940. 306 pp. \$2.50.

The native grace that so many English authors can command when writing of their countryside adorns this novel of an English child on an English farm reliving one of the tenderest and most tragic chapters of England's

history. "A Traveler in Time" tells the story of young Penelope Taberner Cameron who is sent from her parents' house on Cheyne Walk to rest and recover her strength at Thackers, the Derbyshire farm where her mother's family has lived for hundreds of years. In Elizabeth's reign Thackers was the country seat of Anthony Babington, an impassioned and ill-fated partisan of Mary of Scotland, and in its chambers were hatched many abortive plots to effect the escape of the Scottish Queen. To the young visitor from London everything about Thackers spells enchantment; she is surrounded by fields and buildings and household objects which have been in continued use for centuries. Before long she has become a traveler in time, moving between the personages of Thackers's past and its present, divided in her love between her existing uncle and aunt and the dear sixteenth-century friends whose troubles and ambitions she shares when she goes among them.

So delicate a fabric of invention can easily be torn; an extra strain or too fantastic pull would destroy it. Mrs. Uttley preserves it flawlessly. Unaffectedly and with quiet assurance she weaves together Penelope's actual and imagined worlds. The young girl's sorrows are sharply felt: her unhappiness when Anthony Babington tells her his plans for Mary's rescue and she blurts out "The Queen of Scots was executed"; her fears that she may linger too long in the ancient world and never return to Aunt Tissie and Un-

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"The Spider Strikes,"  
etc.

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## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
<b>THE SECRET VANGUARD</b> Michael Innes (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Shooting of minor British bard stirs curtain that forthwith rises on espionage-drama of Scottish highlands with Insp. Appleby starring.	Braw heather mixture of narrow escapes, desperate villainy, and Swinburnian sleuthing, with castellated conclusion that calls army and airforce into action.	Extra good
<b>MURDER MANANA</b> Stephen Bandolier (Duell, Sloan & Pearce: \$2.)	Murders of Manhattan pale beside Corcovadian crime, as discovered by Bruce Windward, Center St. reporter on South American trick.	Dissolution of Nazi murder mob excitingly portrayed, with skittish time-bomb playing important part in lurid and lickerish proceedings.	Wild and woolly
<b>DR. THORNDYKE'S CRIME FILE</b> R. Austin Freeman (Dodd, Mead: \$2.50)	Three full-length adventures of famed English detective, and essays about him and detective stories in general.	"Eye of Osiris," "Mr. Pottermack's Oversight" and "Mystery of Angelina Frood" well worth reading again. A swell bed-side book.	Classic
<b>DEATH AT THE HELM</b> John Rhode (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Scotland Yarders prove that tragic English lovers had been criminally poisoned, but Dr. Priestley supplies finishing touches.	Intricate puzzle worked out in customarily meticulous Priestley style. Deliberate, well-characterized, and mystifying.	Good
<b>DEATH IN ECSTASY</b> Ngao Marsh (Sheridan House: \$2.)	Poisoned chalice slays rich woman devotee of unpleasant London religious cult. Insp. Alleyn solves it.	Early and extremely talky example of New Zealand writer's work. Murder method cleverly devised.	Agreeable

cle Barney. But her joys are eloquent, too, and there is no special pleading in her conscious delight in Thackers, where things go on as they have always gone, surviving times of horror and the ruined hopes of individuals. Neither is there room for skepticism in the reader's mind, confronted by Mrs. Uttley's calm faith in the enduring beauty that is forever England.

F. S.

### Miscellaneous

#### THE ELEMENTS OF LETTERING.

By John H. Benson and Arthur G. Cary. John Stevens. 1940. \$3.

This small book has in it more sense and less rubbish than most. In a compact and very agreeable form its hundred and thirty pages manage to tell about lettering in a straightforward way, and to give the impression of a fresh consideration of an old subject.

A somewhat conventional arrangement of the contents divides the book into three parts: theoretical, practical, and historical. There is little new to be said in any of these fields, but I know of no one who has written about them save Eric Gill who has had experience in plane surface lettering (with brush or pen) and also in cutting letters in stone. This third dimensional consideration adds to the value of the book.

The treatment of each of the three divisions is definite but not involved in too much detail. The authors compare it to a map which limits itself to a few important geographical facts but which is nevertheless more useful as a general guide than a more detailed map. They have got into the book the gist of the whole matter, with enough illustrations to be helpful. Small pictures are printed down the margins. There are some plates of typical and of historical letters, but there are no "pattern" plates as such, from which the student may deliberately copy. We count this a good thing, for most of the hand books on lettering run heavily to such meretricious aids. The book is a statement of sound principles, and more valuable than most lettering books.

C. P. R.

**TORCH OF CIVILIZATION.** By Matthew Luckiesh. Putnam: 1940. 269 pp. \$3.

The conquest of disease and the conquest of darkness share first place in the list of contributions of science to civilization. Even modern medicine has not changed our habits of life as radically as has the lighting industry. The story of that achievement is an old one and familiar. Yet there is always more to be said. Within the past two years cold electric light has come to popularity, following its clean, soft service at the two world's fairs, and today cold chemical light is at the threshold.

Dr. Matthew Luckiesh, director of the lighting research laboratory of the General Electric Company at Nela

Park, Cleveland, is probably the best informed of all men on this subject. He is also an easy and prolific writer. In twenty-five years he has written no less than twenty-one books on light, color, vision, and their applications, all of them clear, readable, and full of information.

The present book is the broadest of them all. The first half is historical, from the time man first came indoors to live under the glow of a tiny lamp-flame until the immediate past of the efficient electric filament. Many forgotten chapters lie between. The second half is of today, and covers the new fluorescent lamps, the future chemical light, and the spectacular giants in searchlights and beams. Most interesting is his discussion of the lighting art, indoors, outdoors, and in decoration. Dr. Luckiesh lives in a world of light and color. He has no difficulty in conveying its heavenly quality. His book is one for every growing youngster and for all who do not yet realize the creative power of science.

G. W.

### Philosophy

**FROM DESCARTES TO KANT.** Readings in the Philosophy of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. By T. V. Smith and Marjorie Grene. University of Chicago. 1940. 899 pp. \$4.50.

Those who teach undergraduate courses in the history of philosophy these days are impaled on the horns of a dreadful dilemma. Either they can go directly to the sources and read the "great books" with their students in the manner of Mortimer J. Adler, or they can teach the history of ideas in terms of trends and developments, place it in a general historical and sociological frame of reference, and contribute choice bits of biographical gossip along the way to whet the student's curiosity. The consequences of pleasing Mr. Adler are to leave serious gaps in the continuity, to cover in the space of a year only a small amount of material, and often to scare the wits out of the neophyte to whom concepts like the "transcendental unity of apperception" of Immanuel Kant are monstrous apparitions of a diseased imagination. The consequences of the second alternative are to fill the student's mind with a vast confusion of names and titles and to allow the whole enterprise to suffer from superficiality.

Trying to grasp both horns of the dilemma, T. V. Smith and Marjorie Grene have put together in this book some of the important philosophical works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including excerpts and sometimes entire essays of Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Newton, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. In addition the book contains short selections from Erasmus, Galileo, and Bacon to illustrate Renaissance humanism and "the new mechanical philosophy," and well-written introductions to each section which present condensed bibliographical data for each

philosopher, summarize his doctrines, and provide some continuity in terms of the work of lesser figures. The book obviously doesn't solve the dilemma of the instructor and one could furthermore quibble about the works included, as for example in the case of Berkeley. In general, however, the editors have made a judicious selection and their anthology represents a useful addition to the library of readings in philosophy for amateur and professional alike.

R. B.

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