

It seems strange that an intelligent and serious writer should be able to close his eyes to the fact that his "people of quality" were a privileged handful, influential enough to persuade the lackeys and sweepings and specimens to fight on their behalf a war to maintain a feudal system in

whose benefits the underprivileged had no hope of sharing. This blind adherence to an outmoded ideal of caste makes queer reading in the year of 1946. It robs Mr. Bellah's book of humanity, and lends it that ladylike quality which is the curse of Southern literature.

With the Gloves Off

WARD TWENTY. By James Warner Bellah. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1946. 160 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by ALBERT Q. MAISEL

A YEAR ago, Major James Warner Bellah wrote a short, tough, violent, bitter, yet amazingly tender book about the inhabitants of Ward 20, the half million inhabitants of all the Wards 20 in all our military hospitals, who must return from the war "clipped"—as they put it—of an arm or leg or eye.

The book was a novel. There was nothing in it which would have subjected it to censorship regulations. No possible question of security was involved. Yet, after it had been set up and printed, a copy fell into the hands of an Army colonel—a Quartermaster Corps colonel, no less—who proceeded to raise so vehement a protest that a timid publisher withdrew the volume. Only today, under the imprint of a different publisher, is Bellah's book reaching the public.

This little example of unofficial and unwarranted censorship and of supine catering to the power of unauthorized authority would be important enough even if Bellah's book were of no particular significance in itself. It becomes all the more important, to the public and to the integrity of the publishing industry, because Jim Bellah has written a book which should long since have had its chance to influence our thinking and our handling of the immensely difficult problems the war has thrust upon millions of veterans—not only those who have been as visibly "clipped" as Bellah's amputees, but all the uncountable others whose wholeness, as men and as fully accepted units of our social fabric, has been impaired by the changes the war has wrought on them and on ourselves.

Whether he intended it or not, Bellah has written a powerful indictment of all our thinking on rehabilitation, and without ever once using that repugnant word. All too many tons of paper have been filled with the vapors of those who see the problem of the "handicapped" as primarily one of learning a new trade, as if we will

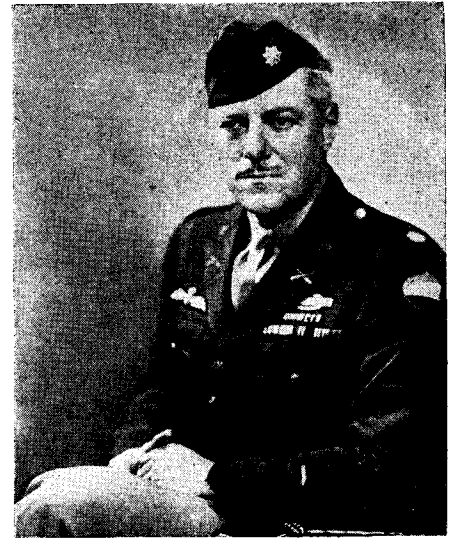
have done all we can for the maimed when we have provided them with a "prosthesis" and a course in putting little nuts on little bolts in some assembly line. The sob sisters, male and female, have filled the magazines and newspapers with sentimental homilies on how to avoid staring at a man without a leg or paeans of praise for employers who have discovered that even the psychoneurotics and the blind can be profitably employed, sometimes even more profitably than the uninjured.

No one, of course, will take issue with these truisms. But Bellah has recognized that it isn't enough—not nearly enough—to give the "clipped" a job. Jobs for these men are but one facet of a struggle to be accepted as whole men.

Weighing far more heavily upon them are the problems of social and sexual acceptance; the necessity that lies upon each of the "clipped" (they refuse, rightly, to call themselves "cripples") to find out whether and to what painful extent they will be rejected, or merely accepted pityingly, by the men who waved and the women who kissed so fervently when they marched off to lose an arm or a leg.

It is because Bellah's lusty book is concerned so much with this imperative struggle to be accepted as whole men that the squeamish may find themselves agreeing with the censorious colonel. For Bellah and his GI's mince no words about what they are after.

They want to see girls, to know girls, to touch girls, to have girls. And their fear that the ordinary girls of their home towns may not want them drives them into frantic, back-hall, exploratory lunges at every nurse and WAC and an all-too-eager intercourse with the professionals and semi-pros from town. These latter, accepting sex on a simpler plane and from the status of social pariahs, are blessed with the ability to ignore a missing limb, not as a conscious act of pity, but with the natural understanding of those who know, all too well, that the world, too, is a maimed and broken place in which they stand as disfigured as the "clipped" ones who seek them out.



—Harris and Ewing

"Whether he intended it or not, James Warner Bellah has written a powerful indictment of all our thinking on rehabilitation, without ever using that repugnant word."

If this is a shocking book, it is because it admits frankly the facts that most of us would avoid facing: that hospitals are sex-charged places full of the pressures of unfulfilled and unfulfillable yearnings, that the blind do develop remarkably acute tactile senses, that even the most carefully paragraphed edicts of military and medical martinets cannot keep all the paths to backrooms and dark lawns patrolled by MP's. There are many who will gag at Bellah's frank and unexpurgated capture of the language of Ward Twenty. There are those who will want to close their eyes to these, as to other, facts of life. And there are some who will read this book furtively, looking for the lurid passages, like the ladies who visit military hospitals because they are fascinated and vicariously thrilled by the sight of the maimed. To such, one can only say, as does Meneilly when asked by two dowagers how he lost his legs, "Scram, ya morbid bitches, before I call the MP's."

But there are many, I hope, who will see far more in this book than a dozen intertwined tales of lust among the limbless. To them, "Ward Twenty" will be far more than a smutty novel, more than a morbid descent into a special kind of hell, more than a skillful essay on how to make passes from a wheelchair. If only a few of us learn that rehabilitation—stupid word—is not some special form of social work to be carried on by our deputies, Jim Bellah will have done much indeed for all veterans and for the consciences of all the rest of us.

As for the prissy, prudish colonel, "Ward Twenty" has several so-called unprintable and incredibly pungent words for him and for action by his blue pencil.

Lots of Good Reading

THE TREASURE CHEST. *An Anthology of Contemplative Prose.* Edited by J. Donald Adams. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1946. 402 pp. \$2.50.

CROSS SECTION 1945. Edited by Edwin Seaver. New York: L. B. Fischer. 1945. 362 pp. \$3.50.

SON-OF-A-GUN STEW. *A Sampling of the Southwest.* Edited by Elizabeth Matchett Stover. Dallas: University Press in Dallas Southern Methodist University. 1945. 216 pp. \$2.50.

ONE AND TWENTY. *Duke Narrative and Verse, 1924-1945.* Selected by William Blackburn. Designed and Illustrated by pupils of Clare Leighton. Durham: Duke University Press. 1945. 297 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

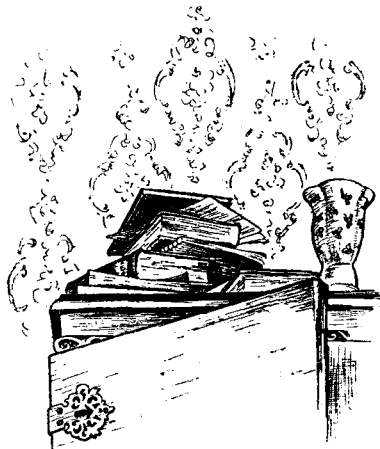
AMONG all the forms of picking other men's brains," declares J. Donald Adams, "the making of anthologies is probably the most harmless." Certainly there is not an ounce of harm in the four specimens of the craft here gathered: the first dedicated to contemplative prose, the second devoted to new and previously unpublished American writing, the third issued to commemorate the first Southwest Book Fair, and the fourth selected from the prose and poetry of graduates and undergraduates of Duke University. Not an ounce of harm, and a considerable weight of good reading.

Mr. Adams tells us that "The Treasure Chest" came into being because of his own "delight in reflective writing," because of his conviction that an anthologist may cut prose up "into small pieces" without doing the material an injustice, and because of his belief that there were "enough readers" who would welcome the "thought-provoking" kind of book he proposed to make.

One may say at once that he has vindicated his personal taste, and demonstrated the fact that short prose excerpts may be entirely self-sufficient; while there is small doubt that time will prove him right also regarding the sufficiency of welcoming readers. It should be mentioned in passing that when Mr. Adams speaks of "small pieces" he really means small, for few of his selections run much more than three hundred words, and many run less; most of them fitting comfortably within the compass of a single page.

"The Treasure Chest" begins with the monitory wisdom of Solomon, and ends with the soldierly wisdom of Harry Brown, while in between there

are wisdom, speculation, and good horse sense of every shade and school. There are Sir Walter Raleigh's famous passage on death, Lincoln's no less famous Gettysburg address, and several time-honored passages from Bacon's essays. Richard Crashaw salutes the virtues of the English tongue, John Donne discourses on sleep, Wordsworth defines the poet, Coleridge pleads for precision in the use of language, Meredith invokes the Comic Spirit, E. M. Forster speaks of the English character, Lytton Strachey holds forth with a flourish on the passing of aristocracy, John Galsworthy touches on the proper treatment of sex in fiction, Virginia Woolf remarks on the "erratic" and "very undependable nature" of "reality," and Shelley presses his old claim that



"Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

William James argues that "the wealth of a nation consists more than in anything else in the number of superior men that it harbors." Samuel Johnson scores the time-wasters who consume the hours of the man "who cannot persuade himself to withdraw from society." Chesterton declares: "The artistic temperament is a disease that afflicts amateurs." Van Wyck Brooks, speaking through the mouth of Oliver Allston, points to the smallness of our age; while Lewis Mumford underlines the obvious and tragic fact that man's scientific achievements have "not been accompanied by equal gains in self-understanding and self-discipline." Rupert Brooke laments the lack of gods and ghosts in the new world; Hazlitt assures us, as he has in many editions, that "One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey," so long as it is solitary; and Thomas Burke announces with perspicacity that "There is no hiding-place so impenetrable as autobiography."

Herbert Spencer circumscribes the power of the state: "The function of

liberalism in the past was that of putting a limit to the powers of kings. The function of true liberalism in the future will be that of putting a limit to the powers of Parliaments." Santayana, writing of British imperialism, says: "Never since the heroic days of Greece has the world had such a sweet, just, boyish master." While Jacques Barzun, writing of that same heroic Greece, declares: "It takes only a copy of Thucydides and a modicum of imagination to recognize that the Greeks at all times of their history led the most chaotic, passionate and disorderly life conceivable." David Hume descants on avarice; Augustine Birrell speaks from the pages of "Obiter Dicta"; Locke utters words on reading that should never be far from any reader's mind; Addison and Steele have their pages, as have Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Milton, and Jeremy Taylor, and Pascal is briefly represented.

Emerson and Thoreau hold forth at greater length than any others of the company; and Thomas Paine speaks to the present generation when he writes: "To see it in our power to make a world happy—to teach mankind the art of being so—to exhibit, on the theater of the universe a character hitherto unknown—and to have, as it were, a new creation intrusted to our hands, are honors that command reflection, and can neither be too highly estimated, nor too gratefully received."

Although there is much besides in "The Treasure Chest," the above is a fair cross-section of the contents. Of the older material, there is nothing that should prove unfamiliar to a well-read person; but there is also very little that does not merit being read again and again. And in the selections from contemporaries there are happy surprises: among them, Elliott Arnold on the men who fly in bombers, Robert L. Duffus on Dunkerque, Harry Emerson Fosdick on the necessity of possessing "a mind with windows," Charles Flandrau on the rewards of solitude, Gerald Kersh on the fragmentary nature of battle, and (among my own favorites) C. S. Lewis, author of the matchless "Screwtape Letters," and Robert Henriques, author of that minor masterpiece, "The Voice of the Trumpet."

Less comprehensive and less elaborately organized than "The Practical Cogitator," this anthology is a fine well for dipping. But when you dip, be sure to remember Locke on reading or your dipping will prove to be vanity.

And the publishers would be well advised to have proof read carefully for a second edition. As it stands, the volume is speckled with typographical errors, and on one page, due appar-