



AS I LIKE IT

William Lyon Phelps

A Spy Reveals His Past . . . Their England and Yankee Hilltops . . . Literary Ministers . . . The Best of the Thrillers . . . Slight Mathematical Correction . . . St. Paul an Investor?

HERE is a new and important addition to the increasing list of books written in English by those who have learned the language in mature years. Yes, it is a war book; but I hope that will not prevent any one from reading it, because it is filled with thrilling adventures and penetrating observation. It is called "Memoirs of a Spy," deals exclusively with happenings along the Eastern fronts, and is by Nicholas Snowden, whose native name is Miklós Soltész. He was born in a little Hungarian city that is now a part of Czechoslovakia. He grew up in the tower of Babel, so instead of laughing idiotically when he heard men talking in a strange language, as is the common way with children, he determined to learn that language. "As a boy I could not endure it to hear anybody speaking a foreign language that I could not understand." Thus at the age of eighteen, he spoke fluently Hungarian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Bohemian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Croatian, German, French, and a little Rumanian and Yiddish. Later he learned English, Spanish, Italian. He was well equipped for spyhood, when he was graduated from the commercial high school in 1914.

So many books have been written on the Western front that it is peculiarly interesting to read this one which deals with the Russians and Hungarians and successive revolutions. To those who, like me, Przemysl was only an unpronounceable name of a place that in the war seemed to be taken and retaken, the account of Mr. Snowden's adventures in and near that city will make it as real as Chicago. In the course of his work, he was captured more than once,

tortured, condemned to death, and for eight months was in prison. In 1923, he embarked for the Argentine, believing it was to be his permanent home. But he is now living in the United States.

While this book is not peace propaganda, or any kind of propaganda, it reveals the folly and horror of war. The pages have mainly straightforward narrative; only occasionally does he comment. But here is something worth remembering: "short as was the word war, it contained within its compass all the miseries and havoc which mankind can suffer."

Passing from tragedy to high comedy, I salute the author of a book which opens with a scene on the Western front and then has no more to do with war than I have. This hitherto-to-me-unknown writer is A. G. Macdonell and the name of the book is "England Their England"; with a preface to the American edition by Christopher Morley. It is a Scotsman's view of England and the English; it is a compound of satire, exaggeration, outrageous mirth, sympathy, poetic charm. It also has much of that irresistible nonsense that only the British know how to write. It always seems strange to an American that England, almost exactly the size of Michigan or North Carolina, can be such an object of curiosity and perplexity to the Scots. It is as if the people of Wisconsin were alien and enigmatic to the people of Michigan.

The chief glory of the English, although they don't know it, is their inconsistency. They have always preferred life to any theory about life. If they have any philosophy at all, it must

be based on experience, and no apparently sound syllogism will stand if inconsistent with facts. They irritate formal and logical people, because they like to do things the way they have done them; and when an improvement in efficiency is pointed out, they are only politely interested, and plainly mean to do nothing about it. Now this is perhaps their greatest charm, because in an age of uniformity and conformity by compulsion, I love to see individuals doing as they choose; the home of lost causes is never the home of lost people.

"England Their England" is altogether too entertaining for a bed book; but it is perfection for reading aloud in congenial company. Although I am a whole-hearted American, the thirteenth chapter, with its incomparable English country scenery, country buildings, and country people, makes me poignantly homesick, homesick for the home of the founders and patriots of America.

The bewildered Scot who attempts to find a solution for the insoluble inconsistencies of the English character comes near the truth when he suddenly has revealed to him in a vision that the English people are fundamentally poets. For the fact is that from that small island and from those people so often regarded as stolid, so sensible as to be insensible, has come the most glorious romantic poetry the world has ever known.

Professor Frances Theresa Russell, of Stanford University, a Browning scholar, has prepared a charming anthology of verse from the two Brownings, called "Two Poets, a Dog, and a Boy." She contributes a narrative of their lives and comments on their poems; and the

book gains in value by the illustrations drawn by Cary Odell; "the pictures alone make the book worth having." The play, "The Barretts of Wimpole Street," gave renewed life to the dog Flush, who has here a chapter all to himself. This is as good a book for children as can be found.

Another delightful book for children of eight and eighty, verses and pictures by G. K. Chesterton, is "Greybeards at Play," with the secondary title "Literature and Art for Old Gentlemen." First published in 1900, this is its author's earliest work, and has been for many years out of print. For restoring it, the publishers deserve our hearty thanks.

A book composed entirely of after-dinner funny stories, over 300 pages of them, is "The Table in a Roar," or "If You've Heard It, Try to Stop Me," compiled by James Ferguson, illustrated by Bateman and Belcher, with an introduction by E. V. Lucas, whose own selections there given are among the best. This book will be a godsend to after-dinner speakers, for although some of these yarns are shopworn, others are not, and we should devoutly remember what the late Mr. Depew said: "Thank God, there is always one man at every dinner who has never heard anything."

Richard Butler Glaenger is a scholar, a bookman, a humorist and a wit. His latest book, "Spoofs," is a collection of fun in prose and a little in verse, from the "works" of about forty contemporary writers, and every page is a puncture of pretentiousness. Here is much fun for small cash. Among the contributors are Don Marquis, F. P. A., H. I. Phillips, George Chappell, Oliver Herford, Julian Street, Burton Rascoe, Fairfax Downey, and many more. The admirable illustrations are drawn by the editor.

"Shooting the Bull," by David Ellbey, the assumed name of the son of the most famous newspaper man in England, is the "lowdown" on newspaper work, day and night, in London and New York. For this young man, who learned his business in London, and is again active in that town, worked for some time on American dailies. Many readers of morning and evening newspapers wonder just how the news is assembled, the various parts of the vast journal put together, etc., etc. The author tells us with plenty of sprightly

detail. He shows the seamy side of newspaper life, but he loves journalism with all his heart, and is proud to be a newspaper man. He writes in lively slang and with great gusto, telling many good stories. I think he must be mistaken, however, in his account of how he heard over an American radio the round-by-round report of a prize-fight, wherein the announcer used constantly every form of blasphemy and obscenity. I simply cannot believe this.

The distinguished and beloved retired Chancellor of New York University, Elmer E. Brown, was fortunately persuaded, in fact compelled, to assemble some of his essays and addresses in one compact volume called modestly "A Few Remarks." They are full of wit and wisdom, the result of inspiration and experience, valuable to all teachers and parents.

"The Better Part," by the Reverend Doctor Lyman P. Powell, contains many Good Thoughts in Bad Times. This is a plea for personal religion, by an Episcopal clergyman in New York, who is as broad-minded as he is devout. A high-hearted faith animates the work, which communicates itself to the reader. Those earnest but melancholy churchgoers, who believe, with Elijah, that when they die, God will not have a friend left, should read these pages, and take courage. *Sursum corda!*

Incomprehensible as the mental attitude of the mystic is to the man in the street, there will always be a number of men and women who live in spiritual daily communion with the unseen. I have just been reading a little book called "Splendor in the Night" which gives in simple and clear language an account of an experience of tremendous exaltation. There is a preface by the admirable Rufus M. Jones, and the volume is dedicated to the queen of the mystics, Evelyn Underhill.

"Flawed Blades," by the admirable Percival Christopher Wren, is composed of tales from the Foreign Legion. *Verbum Sap.* But its title is taken from a striking stanza by Wilfred Gibson, that Kipling must admire.

The Sword outwears the Sheath—
So end the God-loved lucky lives,
The tragedy is when the flawed blade snaps,
And yet the Sheath survives.

Speaking of poetry, I am very glad that Louis Untermeyer, the accomplish-

ed poet and anthologist, has placed together in one volume his critical anthologies "Modern American Poetry" and "Modern British Poetry." His biographical and critical notes are valuable. The book, not cumbersome, contains more than 1600 pages.

"On Yankee Hilltops," by Walter Prichard Eaton, who is at home equally in the garish artificial day of the theatre and in the natural woods of winter, is itself as good as a brief vacation. It has a beautiful frontispiece, white birches in the snow, by Edwin H. Lincoln. This book belongs to the literature of refreshment and also of healing.

The late Professor George H. Palmer's translation of Homer's "Odyssey" in rhythmic prose is now re-issued in a most attractive edition, with excellent full-page colored illustrations by N. C. Wyeth. A very good present for a boy or girl or for any one else.

"The Making of Note-Books," by Professor Charles B. Wright of Middlebury College, is full of wise and cheerful reflections on travel in Europe and Vermont and elsewhere. It has another purpose—to show younger pilgrims how notebooks of travel and reading should be made.

It is not often that I recommend a book dealing with high-power salesmanship; for it is not often that a book of that kind, however well adapted to its purpose, comes within the very wide range of this column. But here is a small volume, printed by one of the most artistic presses in America, which emphasizes the spiritual and psychological aspect of the art of making the relation between buyer and seller. Furthermore, there is much practical wisdom on life in general. I have never seen a book quite like this; and while it is to be recommended to all young men and women entering commercial life, I think that I am not the only one who will, wholly from a detached point of view, enjoy reading it. It is called (after the author's experience as a salesman) "Nine Out of Ten Say Yes" and is signed by the name Tee Eff.

An extremely useful book is "Music Masters in Miniature," by George C. Jell. In a volume of less than 300 pages, biographies of twenty-four great musical composers are given, beginning with Bach and closing with Stravinsky. The modest preface expresses the aim of the

book; the author does not attempt to give the final word in criticism, but merely to supply in convenient form the information that many want and need. At the end is a list of the composers' works most frequently performed. The numerous illustrations by Frank R. Southard add to the attractiveness of an attractive book. It seems to me one of the miracles of human history, that music, the greatest of all the arts, should be so modern. If we had lived about two hundred years ago, we should have missed all the best music of the world. And how strange that with no premonitory dawn, the year 1685 saw within one month the birth of two babies, Handel and Bach!

The year 1933 has already seen a bumper crop of thrillers. Here are some of the best. First I salute a new author, a new detective, and a new publishing firm, all three of whom have collaborated in producing a splendid hair-raiser called "The Ravenelle Riddle." The author, E. Best Black, is an American who knows London better than most Englishmen; the metropolitan and country scenes are perfect. The new detective is a wizard. This the first book issued by the publishers, Loring and Mussey, should be the advance agent of their prosperity.

"The Prime Minister's Pencil," by Cecil Wayne, is one of the most ingenious of murder tales; and is also steadily exciting. The accomplished Carolyn Wells has written her masterpiece of murder in a book called "The Broken O." "The Claverton Affair" by John Rhode shows how murder can be committed in such a manner as to defy chemical analysis. Without giving away the plot, I will merely remark that a depth bomb explodes in the stomach. "Harlequin of Death" by the famous S. Horler, shows how an English gentleman out of training can defeat a Chicago gangster in the pink. Very exciting. "Pascal's Mill," by Ben Ames Williams, is remarkable for its character-creation as well as for its mystery appeal. "American Gun Mystery," by Ellery Queen, though somewhat over-written, is ingeniously intricate.

It is a pity that Dornford Yates, who has written so many wildly exciting romances agreeably mixed with mirth, should have attempted to imitate "Alice in Wonderland," in his latest book,

"The Stolen March." Up to the point where the mules begin to talk, this story is in his best manner. Then it becomes as tedious as it is impossible.

I am glad to see two men connected with the production of literature appointed as American ministers to foreign countries. The novelist and essayist Meredith Nicholson has been appointed Minister to Paraguay, and the publisher Lincoln MacVeagh Minister to Greece. Both will be very popular. Synchronously with the Greek appointment, it is pleasant to note that a new line of steamers will run directly between New York and Athens. Greece is now one of the countries where Americans can travel most cheaply; and travelling in the sublime interior of that land was never so comfortable as now. Furthermore, the amazing excavations under the direction of Professor Capps and Professor Shear of Princeton make an additional inducement for Americans to visit Greece.

Miss Alice A. Holt of Seattle, Wash., quite properly reminds me that when I gave a list of convenient dictionaries, I ought to have included "The Winston Simplified Dictionary," of which the "Encyclopedic Edition" she particularly recommends.

My statement that I am rereading all Dickens's novels in chronological order has called out several interesting letters and I am pleased to see others are engaged in the same delightful occupation. Owen B. McCarthy of Louisville, Ky., writes:

To read the entire works of Dickens today, is a tour de force; yet, to re-peruse them as you purpose, is something more; or, as our mutual friend, Mantalini, in "Nickleby," would say: "such a demd extraordinary out-of-the-way kind of thing as never was!" It is now six or seven years since I completed the 34 vol. "Gadshill Edition," published by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, London, and by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons, on our side of the pond. Thus it is as a comrade-in-arms that I beg to solicit your attention. . . . In your book "Advance of the English Novel" we learn that Dickens, more than any other English novelist, has had a decided influence on Russia. Sapristi! Doctor, I opine not only by his luminosity, but his voluminosity as well. (Apologies to Sheridan). There's nothing of an 18-day diet 'bout these Russian novels; however, since you esteem "Anna Karenina" (May number), I suppose I shall read same. Dickens, I think, is best read, when development of character and situation is kept in mind, in lieu of plot and story—for the greater part of all his stories. Mantalini's "My life is one demd horrid grind . . . gone

to the demnition bow-wows," lingers in my recollection when that worthy's exploits have become nebulous. Inimitable characters! . . . you've given Dickens a "new deal." We'll brush up on our "Bleak House."

It interests me that Mr. McCarthy has the "Gadshill Edition" for that is the one I own and read; there is no better edition of Dickens anywhere.

I am glad also to observe in the P.S. to the letter that Mr. McCarthy joins the FAERY QUEENE CLUB

He had two reasons—sheer admiration for Spenser and to answer in the negative Macaulay's famous criticism concerning the paucity of its readers.

Miss Antoinette Axene, of Kansas City, Mo., read the entire poem, beginning it on her seventeenth birthday and finishing it in four months.

In my English literature work last year (my senior year in High School) I found that I seemed to enjoy some things that were nothing short of torture to some of my classmates—Spenser, for example. (You should have heard the chorus of artistically blended soprano and baritone groans that arose when our teacher assigned one canto) and Chaucer and Dryden and Pope. Most of our class hated Pope, but he is hilariously funny—in places. I am sorry to say that the tables were often turned, as I did not care for some . . . in which the others were very interested.

My query in the August issue as to where are to be found successors to Hardy, Conrad, Bennett, Moore, Galsworthy, kept Daniel J. Packer of Trenton, N. J., sleepless until he wrote me that the worthy successors are Somerset Maugham, Willa Cather, H. W. Freeman, David Garnett, and Ernest Hemingway. *De Gustibus*—Yet I am glad to see the name of H. W. Freeman.

FANO CLUB

Hugh Rose, Jr., Yale 1932, saw the Guardian Angel in Fano in June.

REVISED VERSIONS

I do not know why all the revised, and modern, and "American," and vernacular versions of the Bible regard it as an advantage to have the page set up in paragraphs rather than in verses. One of many reasons for preferring the Authorized Version is that it is printed in verses; infinitely better for reading aloud, and distinctly better for reading in solitude.

CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS EMPHASIS

The most profound, significant, and beneficial change in the emphasis on

religious ideals is the change from *giving up* to *giving*.

OPTIMISM

The average cat spends more time purring than she does meowing.

STRANGE

It is strange that the best Prohibitionist and the best champagne should both be very dry.

THE NEW DEAL

It should be observed that the N.R.A. is breaking the ten commandments. *Six* shalt thou labour.

ST. PAUL AN INVESTOR

The apostle must have felt the depression. See Acts XXVI: 29. "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that

hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

PUSHING THE PLATE

Why is it that in all the novels I read, whenever any one finishes a meal, he always pushes away the plate? I finish three meals every day, and never push away a plate.

BOOKS, AUTHORS, AND PUBLISHERS

Those marked with an asterisk are suitable for study and discussion by reading clubs

- *"Memoirs of a Spy," by Nicholas Snowden. Scribners. \$3.
 *"England Their England," by A. G. Macdonell. Macmillan. \$2.
 *"A Few Remarks," by Elmer E. Brown. N. Y. Univ. Press. \$2.
 *"The Better Part," by L. P. Powell. Bobbs-Merrill. \$1.50.
 "Flawed Blades," by P. C. Wren. Stokes. \$2.
 *"Modern American Poetry, Modern British Poetry," ed. Untermeyer. Harcourt, Brace. \$4.75.
 *"On Yankee Hilltops," by W. P. Eaton. W. A. Wilde. \$1.
 "Two Poets, a Dog, and a Boy," by F. T. Russell. Lippincott. \$2.
 "Greybeards at Play," by G. K. Chesterton. Sheed & Ward, 63 5th Av., N. Y. \$1.
 "The Table in a Roar," by J. Ferguson. Dutton. \$2.
 "Spoofs," by R. B. Glaenger. McBride. \$2.
 "The Ravenelle Riddle," by E. B. Black. Loring & Mussey. 248 E. 57th St., N. Y. \$2.
 "The Prime Minister's Pencil," by C. Wayne Kinsey. \$2.
 "The Broken O," by Carolyn Wells. Lippincott. \$2.
 "The Claverton Affair," by J. Rhode. Dodd Mead. \$2.
 "Harlequin of Death," by S. Horler. Little Brown. \$2.
 "Pascal's Mill," by B. A. Williams. Dutton. \$2.
 "The American Gun Mystery," by Ellery Queen. Stokes. \$2.
 "The Stolen March," by D. Yates. Minton Balch. \$2.
 "Shooting the Bull," by D. Ellbey. Grayson & Grayson. London. 10s 6d.
 *"The Odyssey of Homer," tr. Palmer (illustr.) Houghton Mifflin. \$2.50.
 *"The Making of Note-Books," by C. B. Wright. Middlebury Press, Vt. 600 copies.
 "Splendor in the Night," anon. Mosher Press, Portland, Maine. 500 copies.
 "Nine Out of Ten Say Yes," by Tee Eff. New Haven: Moore & Drummond.
 *"Complete Works of Dickens," Gadshill Edition. 34 vols. Scribners.
 "Winston Simplified Dictionary." John C. Winston Co. \$5 and \$3.50.
 *"Music Masters in Miniature," by George C. Jell. Scribners. \$2.

LONELY DOLPHIN

By William Rose Benét

Sky and water like the inner glaze of a shell
 Blending their nacres
 Rippled in faint color, and on the undulant swell
 Of the infinite acres
 Of the ocean, ploughed by a gleam of the sun to gold,
 A darkness curved in spray
 Far from the haunt of its mates, and hurdled and rolled
 In the gathering gray.

The rounded slippery back ink-black and sleek,
 The flash of the underside
 Glimmering white, the strange and flattened beak
 Stabbing the immersing tide,
 And like a lone far sail the dorsal fin
 Slanting and furrowing far
 Till the flippered tail again bade frolic begin
 Under the Northern star;

Like an elemental and fantastic wish
 In a world first made—
 Acrobatic evolution of the dreams of fish—
 Where no music played
 The dolphin danced—as that elder sunset day
 Saw quaint saraband begin
 Round the dark Sicilian ship, and porpoise-play
 Of ancestral kin.

But here no golden musician, death-surrounded
 By mariner enemies,
 Clutched his harp till over the ocean sounded
 Such melodies
 As still in darkness, obsequious to the moon,
 It chants for underbreath;
 For here no dolphins hung on Arion's tune
 Ere he leaped to death

Yet cheated death when a dark fin bubbled across,
 A slippery back upbore
 His fainting body, and so at Taenaros
 He waded ashore—
 But now it seemed as ocean twilight increased
 And the legend left the mind,
 Here gambolled the last of all dolphins and the least
 Far from its coast and kind,

Snorting in foam, and then in a limber arc
 Gathering its back to lunge,
 Scattering pale pearl and patterning the dark
 With curving leap and plunge;
 Creature of instinct, in mysterious mirth
 Frolicking lonely and free,
 With a gesture utterly alien to our earth
 From the cold and ominous sea!