

THE EDITOR RECOMMENDS—

BOOKS THAT MAY HAVE ESCAPED YOU

1. *"My Antonia"* by Willa Cather. Readers would do well to take advantage of the new edition published by Houghton Mifflin of this authentic picture of western prairie life.
2. *"The Book of Marjorie"* (Knopf). Dialogues between a young twentieth century husband and wife concerning the future of their children. An idyl for young married folk.
3. *"The Physiology of Taste"* by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. Boni and Liveright have brought out a popular priced volume of these delectable "Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy".
4. *"Silbermann"* by Jacques de Lacretelle (Boni, Liveright). A sensitive study of adolescence and race prejudice.
5. *"Catherine the Great"* by Katharine Anthony (Knopf). In this penetrating portrait the fascinating empress comes alive.

*A Woman's Novel on Women, A
Man's Novel on Woman,
A Woman's Novel on Man*

THE autumn fiction must be of great fascination to the psychologist.

In reading in advance many novels of which I cannot yet speak, I am amazed to find them all redolent of sex problems, in one way or another definitely affected by modern, sometimes exceedingly modern, psychology. If you are interested in this study you could not do better than combine your autumn fiction with the best psychological books obtainable. Your reward will be rich fruit from the student's standpoint. The similarity of theme, too, is often

astounding. Arnold Bennett and Ellen Glasgow have struck fire with a somewhat similar psychological idea. Floyd Dell and A. Hamilton Gibbs are at grips. Dorothy Canfield and Roger Burlingame choose characters not so different. Edna Ferber shows us as her main character the dominating woman with a career; likewise Nalbro Bartley in "Her Mother's Daughter" and Frank Swinnerton, in part, in "Summer Storm".

Take, first, Roger Burlingame. In "Susan Shane" (Scribner) he proves himself a novelist of richness and insight. This is the story of a woman who puts love out of her life for the sake of money. It is constantly interesting; it reminds one slightly of Louis Bromfield's "Possession" but is an easier book to read.

Dorothy Canfield has written in "Her Son's Wife" (Harcourt, Brace) by far her most interesting novel. Critics, generally, will probably not call it her best, but unless I am greatly mistaken the public will. It is a universal theme treated with cold detachment, yet with all the warmth of feminine detail which Mrs. Fisher handles so expertly. Mrs. Bascomb ruins her son's life, but the author does not take sides. Although in a sense it is the story of "So Big", of a woman with a career, it is also essentially different. Practically every woman will like this book, or a part of it. There is no phase of life in an American community that Mrs. Fisher does not illuminate with rare understanding and with taste. She does not flinch from tragedy, yet the sum and substance of her story is hopeful. It is a fine performance.

Ellen Glasgow is rapidly stealing May Sinclair's crown. "The Romantic Comedians" (Doubleday, Page) is one of the most difficult of stories to write: the love of a man over sixty for a girl slightly over twenty. Yet the gentle satire, the pungent wit, the amazing facility of this great artist, make it plausible and never disagreeable, unless, indeed, Miss Glasgow wishes it to be so. A great book. It is lighter in key than "Barren Ground", yet its depth is the same. Every page has its quotable gem, sly observations of human frailty caught in unforgettable phrases. "Like most lawyers", she writes of her aged hero, "and all vestrymen, he was able to believe automatically quite a number of things which he knew were not true." I repeat, a great book!

Miss Lowell Again Triumphs

THE second posthumous volume from the pen of Amy Lowell, "East Wind" (Houghton, Mifflin), is one which was very dear to her. I can remember her great readings of these poetic short stories of simple people. Many of them were written while she was at work on the Keats biography. She knew her New England. She writes of it with fervor, with drama, with beauty. Then, too, there is a pathetic, crying note of loneliness in these stark pictures of souls struggling often against environment, against the driving destiny of inheritance. "A Dracula of the Hills" is every whit as great a short story as "Ethan Frome". What tremendous facility she had. It makes lesser minds fade into oblivion. Do not think that the volume is without humor. There is dry wit on every page; but it is the macabre that interests her most. Both Robert Frost and

Miss Lowell overlooked the homelier aspects of New England life, but in doing so they were artists, for they achieved a unity which is striking in its effect of beauty and terror. The thread of insanity which runs through so many decadent families here runs riot. There is the man who feared grass, and the man who loved apples unduly. The borderline between humor and tragedy in the treatment of this theme is very slight, but Miss Lowell never crosses it. Her humor lies in her characterizations, not in the following out of the main theme. This is a better book than "What's O'Clock". In my opinion Miss Lowell's greatest moments, with rare exceptions, come when she can be dramatic. She was a born playwright, a born teller of tales. Her versatility is constantly amazing. I speak of her in the present. How can one do otherwise?

The Conscientious Objector Arises in Fiction

NO cleverer scheme could have been devised by a novelist for showing the complex emotions of this postwar period than a consideration of the man who refused to fight. Two of our most popular novelists have carried this theme into their new stories. In "Labels" (Little, Brown) A. Hamilton Gibbs shows us an English family torn asunder by the conflict of emotions resulting from the war and following it. The love story is here, too, but it is the picture of the family circle that remains in the mind, the clear, sane exposition, the living characters. Mr. Gibbs has carried on in a fine way the spirit of "Soundings".

Floyd Dell's "An Old Man's Folly" (Doran) deals, of course, with America;

with the stirrings of radical movements; with Ann Elizabeth who sacrifices much in her disbelief of war; with her lover who fought and her friends who didn't; with old Mr. Windle, whose charm and vagary make him one of the most delightful of fiction characters. It is the richest story Mr. Dell has constructed. It shows him a novelist of proportions which have never before been fulfilled. His canvas is broad. From Massachusetts of the fifties to his heroine's trial he maintains the interest constantly. His is a story poignant, compelling, detached in its discussions of politics. Propaganda such as there is, is always secondary to the novel, to the love interest. Radicals in America are quietly and humorously analyzed, with sympathy as well as with a leavening amount of ribaldry. The war is in the air this autumn. There will be many war stories. Neither "Labels" nor "An Old Man's Folly" comes in this category. They are footnotes to war, comments on our present day attitude toward international problems. They must be part of the equipment of every thinking man and woman, yet they will seem good stories to those who do not think overmuch.

A Sincere Opinionated Critic

NO more laughable book has crossed my desk in months than "The Outlook for American Prose" by Joseph Warren Beach (University of Chicago Press). Yet it is so well written, so well founded on a definite viewpoint, that it cannot be lightly disregarded. Mr. Beach's estimates of

various of our own authors and of English men of letters are startling, yet shrewd. At almost every turn I disagree with him emotionally, yet only once in a while do I feel that I could best him in an argument. To be sure, he is vastly patronizing. That Alfred Kreymborg and Sherwood Anderson stand out as the hopes of American letters, is a statement which most of us would challenge. Mr. Beach is a brave man. One cannot but admire him. One cannot but admire his book, although one laughs at it. What a clever paragraph this is:

Mr. Van Vechten is the Baedeker of the intelligentsia. His novels are veritable guide books to Paris and New York, with the stars on everything that Baedeker leaves undistinguished and E. V. Lucas ignores. In "Peter Whiffle" he devotes many solid pages to a list of the things he did in Paris during his visit there in his twenties. He concludes with the modest declaration: "In short, you will observe that I did everything that young Americans do when they go to Paris." It is a very modest declaration. What he means is that he did very much more than other young Americans do, having inside information, and that other young Americans will do well to profit by his suggestions. "I dined with Olive Fremstad at the Mercedes and Olive Fremstad dined with me at the Café d'Harcourt." Not all young Americans will be in a position to invite distinguished opera-singers to dinner, let alone being invited to dine with them. But they can look up the Mercedes or the Café d'Harcourt and invite to dinner whatever most distinguished friend they find in Paris. They can follow Mr. Van Vechten to lunch at the Deux Magots in the company of unidentified artists presided over by the two bland grotesques. They can learn from him where to get their perfumery and dresses, if they are women; what bars and music halls to frequent, if they are men; where, in either case, to find Brittany china-ware and impressionist paintings. They can learn to speak easily of Dranem and Max Dearly, André Gide and Jeanne Bloch.

— J. F.

A SHELF OF RECENT BOOKS

IS ENGLAND DONE?

By Allan Nevins

PROBABLY no thoroughly informed person believes that the industrial position of Great Britain has been seriously undermined. But the continuance of unemployment, the general strike, and the protracted coal strike following it have provoked a great deal of croaking on both sides of the Atlantic.

The American croaking usually has in it a slightly exultant, we-do-it-better-over-here note. Frank Plachy brings out this point of view with considerable emphasis in his little volume on "Britain's Economic Plight". Mr. Plachy is a bright, rather glib young American who has spent two years abroad and has made up his mind that if England would prosper, she should imitate the hustling land of rotary clubs, trade associations, and pep. He is cocksure about some subjects which are treated by slower minds as debatable. Thus he insists at length upon the demoralizing effects of the dole, though expert investigators have lately asserted that the alleged evil effects of unemployment insurance upon the worker's willingness to accept a job have been much exaggerated, and that the precautions are adequate to prevent any substantial abuse. Mr. Plachy also declares, with a bright air of optimism, that there are probably not more than 400,000 "unemployables" in Great Britain; expert investigators, on the other hand, have put the number at only five per cent of the 1,400,000 unemployed.

Among the other conclusions of

which Mr. Plachy seems very sure is that the working day in the coal industry, seven hours, is too short (he does not mention that the Coal Commission itself made recommendations against increasing it); that England needs more large-scale organization of industry — he notes the textile business as an especially tempting field; that labor is inefficient and that its 'canny philosophy is fatal to any hope of high wages; that in building and other work the British employer is hopelessly obedient to rule of thumb methods; and that the British pay too little attention to modern advertising and modern selling methods, including the use of the instalment system. There is real force in a great deal of what he says. It is unquestionably true that the United States has of recent years risen superior to Great Britain in inventiveness, wholesale production, and business management. Many of Mr. Plachy's observations are shrewd and profitable. Yet some of his criticism of the British workers, business men, and government seems too facile and hence altogether too harsh.

After all, the United States has natural resources far, far greater in proportion to population than Great Britain; we have our food, our iron, copper, and zinc, our cotton and petroleum, right here at home; and in exploiting our immense wealth we have been able to furnish an ever widening market for labor. Moreover, we are recovering, not from a four years' war, but from a one year war. We should bear in mind the difficulties of a nation which imports wheat from Argentina, beef from America, wool from Aus-