

Mr. Alexander Neweroff's *City of Bread* (Doran, \$2.50) is a book that placed next to "The Vanguard" is a most invigorating experience, for it has all the stable virtues of literature that Mr. Bennett's book lacks. This book deals with the most tragic and unpleasant things of life — dirt, famine, death — yet its sense of poetry and pity is not short of masterly. It is the story of Mishka, a little peasant boy, who undertakes a perilous journey to Tashkent, the fabled city, to get bread for his starving mother and little brothers and sisters; the consciousness of the story is entirely Mishka's, and the vision, thoughts and emotions of a quick-witted twelve-year-old boy are depicted realistically and with unsurpassed imagination. Mr. Neweroff's eye for illuminating detail, or what may be called the dramatic synthesis of description, is especially keen.

Mr. Klaus Mann is an author whose youth is evident by the immaturity of his little book, *The Fifth Child* (Boni & Liveright, \$1.50). In an odd blend of childhood idyll and love episode, Mr. Mann shows a fine quality of conscious skill in depicting child psychology, but his organic conception of the book is decidedly confused, since the whole thing is an irrelevantly elaborated incident, lacking even unity of moods.

The modern development of the novel along the lines of psychological verity has enabled Mr. Desider Kostolanyi in *The Bloody Poet* (Macy-Masius, \$2.00) to infuse a new vitality into the historical method (O accursed method!). Nero is the central character, and it is not the schoolbook tyrant and libertine we view, but a vividly embodied study of frustrated aspiration. The emperor has everything but that which he craves with a singular ardor — poetic genius. He tries to convince himself he has it, but he is intelligent enough to be constantly haunted by the absolute knowledge of his defect. This novel assumes a subjective significance which the historical novel rarely owns, for Mr. Kostolanyi, it seems, cannot conceal a certain contempt for his tragic hero, as though he might be one of his own complexes. Despite some excellently imagined and important scenes, the mechanical puppet-like construction of Nero's character with which Mr.

Kostolanyi seems to have expressed his fear and anger at Nero estranges the reader from the sense of supreme tragedy that should be conveyed by a novel in this key.

Mr. Octave Aubry's *On the King's Couch* (Boni & Liveright, \$2.50) deals with a class and a generation which have probably had the most mechanical regard for love of any in history. The gaiety in these pages of Casanova's escapades has an artificial-light effect that chills one. What a frightful ritual of sexual anarchy these poor people must have endured — and for what reason? To honor a preposterous current fashion. Somewhere their hearts must have rebelled. . . . All archetypes are people who have gained distinction by a kind of madness or disease; Casanova and Cellini suffered from promiscuity.

Mr. Panaït Istrati brings a strange sensibility to literature, a curious, unsettled contribution. *Uncle Anghel* (Knopf, \$2.50) is a blend of folk-realism and hero-myth. The hero-myth was meant to teach us how to live, to triumph over life's obstacles, but with an intuitive folk-cynicism, Mr. Istrati drains the high-handed passionate deeds of his hero of their essential value. The most moving thing about the book is its dismay before the pestilential evil of life — a profound innocent resentment that one associates with naïve poets. But this quality is almost lost in the latter half of the book, which recounts in a rather splendid style the deeds of a Roumanian folk-hero.

If Miss Mary Biggs had felt an exigency for style as she has felt an exigency for expression in her *Lily-Iron* (McBride, \$2.00) she would have written a notable book. But her talent seems to come untutored from some place where civilization has not quite permeated the soil. One finds admirable a certain freshness of perception and a vigorous stroke in Miss Biggs's book, while one deplores the lack of sentence-balance — sentence melody, is better — which would have given its rather theatrical conceptions their inevitably demanded illusions.

Mr. Henri de Montherlant's novel, *The Bullfighters* (Dial, \$2.50), centers about the psychology of (reputedly) one of the most unique and moving spectacles provided by

the fecundity of the modern world, the bullfight. After reading the highly diverse reactions of Mr. Waldo Frank and Mr. D. H. Lawrence, neither of whom, I believe, ever faced a bull in the arena, this book of Mr. Montherlant, who is a practised bullfighter, has a pronounced air of disillusion. Endowed with neither the unctuous artistic hysteria of Mr. Frank, nor the remote god-

like disgust of Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Montherlant's descriptions seem like severe technical disclosures. His hero is the actor to whom is revealed the farce behind the drama, and whom it strikes with sardonic humor and a little real remorse: ". . . the soft-colored entrails (of the bull), pink, blue, green, rainbow-hued like a soap bubble; they made one think of ripe fruit".



## PEDANTIC HUMOR

**P**EDANTIC HUMOUR. No essential distinction is intended between this & POLY-SYLLABIC HUMOUR; one or the other name is more appropriate to particular specimens, & the two headings are therefore useful for reference; but they are manifestations of the same impulse, & the few remarks needed may be made here for both. A warning is necessary, because we have all of us, except the abnormally stupid, been pedantic humourists in our time. We spend much of our childhood picking up a vocabulary; we like to air our latest finds; we discover that our elders are tickled when we come out with a new name that they thought beyond us; we devote some pains to tickling them further; & there we are, pedants & polysyllabists all. The impulse is healthy for children, & nearly universal — which is just why warning is necessary; for among so many there will always be some who fail to realize that the clever habit applauded at home will make them insufferable abroad. Most of those who are capable of writing well enough to find readers do learn with more or less of delay that playful use of long or learned words is a one-sided game boring the reader more than it pleases the writer, that the impulse to it is a danger-signal — for there must be something wrong with what they are saying if it needs recommending by such puerilities — & that yielding to the impulse is a confession of failure. But now & then even an able writer will go on believing that the incongruity between simple things to be said & out-of-the-way words to say them in has a perennial charm; it has, for the reader who never outgrows hobbledehoyhood; but for the rest of us it is dreary indeed. It is possible that acquaintance with such labels as *pedantic* & *polysyllabic humour* may help to shorten the time that it takes to cure a weakness incident to youth.

An elementary example or two should be given. The words *homoeopathic* (small or minute), *sartorial* (of clothes), *interregnum* (gap), are familiar ones: — *To introduce 'Lords of Parliament' in such homoeopathic doses as to leave a preponderating power in the hands of those who enjoy a merely hereditary title. / While we were motoring out to the station I took stock of his sartorial aspect, which had changed some what since we parted. / In his vehement action his breeches fall down & his waistcoat runs up, so that there is a great interregnum.* — H. W. Fowler in "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage".

# THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

Compiled by Frank Parker Stockbridge, Life Member of the American Library Association, in Co-operation with the Public Libraries of America

Two new books have gained the popularity which intensive demands at the libraries indicate and make this mid-winter report somewhat more newsy than usual at this time of year. There is little to say about "Transition" and "Bismarck" which has not been better said elsewhere: but if a reporter may venture in the realm of prophecy (it has been done) the suggestion that "Transition" will not climb to a high place in the library records is modestly put forward. That does not imply any lack of merit in Dr. Durant's personal story, but merely that public library trustees, as quasi-public officials, are prone to discourage the circulation of books containing violently controversial matter. The barring of the "Catholic Encyclopedia" from the shelves of a Western library is a case in point. And while in the prophesying business, let your reporter suggest that two books, the titles of which have not yet appeared in this score, are headed towards it: Mark Sullivan's second volume of "Our Times" and John Erskine's "Adam and Eve". — F. P. S.

## FICTION

1. A Good Woman	Louis Bromfield	STOKES
2. Jalna	Mazo de la Roche	LITTLE
3. Kitty	Warwick Deeping	KNOPF
4. Death Comes for the Archbishop	Willa Cather	KNOPF
5. The Grandmothers	Glenway Wescott	HARPER
6. Dusty Answer	Rosamund Lehmann	HOLT
7. Elmer Gantry	Sinclair Lewis	HARCOURT
8. God and the Groceryman	Harold Bell Wright	APPLETON
9. Sorrell and Son	Warwick Deeping	KNOPF
10. Barberry Bush	Kathleen Norris	DOUBLEDAY
11. An American Tragedy	Theodore Dreiser	LIVERIGHT
12. Wall Flowers	Temple Bailey	PENN

## GENERAL

1. Trader Horn	Alfred Aloysius Horn and Ethelreda Lewis	SIMON
2. Mother India	Katherine Mayo	HARCOURT
3. "We"	Charles Lindbergh	PUTNAM
4. The Story of Philosophy	Will Durant	SIMON
5. Napoleon	Emil Ludwig	LIVERIGHT
6. The Royal Road to Romance	Richard Halliburton	BOBBS
7. The Glorious Adventure	Richard Halliburton	BOBBS
8. Revolt in the Desert	T. E. Lawrence	DORAN
9. What CAN a Man Believe?	Bruce Barton	BOBBS
10. Transition*	Will Durant	SIMON
11. Bismarck*	Emil Ludwig	PUTNAM
12. This Believing World	Lewis Browne	MACMILLAN

\* This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score.