

The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Fiction

NACIO: HIS AFFAIRS. By ELEANOR MERCEIN KELLY. Harpers, 1931. \$2.50.

Mrs. Kelly begins her latest story of the perennial Urruty family with a "lehenpheredikis," as the Basques laughingly call a prologue. In this "first speaking" she explains that while sitting in a tree-top gnawing her pen (she has her study in a tree-top) somewhere in Kentucky, she was overcome by a desire to know what might have happened to all her old friends in Andorra of whom she has written in "Basquerie" and the "Book of Bette." So she climbed down from her tree, or perhaps she has some stairs, and crossed the necessary continents and oceans to find out. Since a good many American readers felt exactly the same curiosity and are now able to satisfy it without such energetic travel, this story of Nacio Urruty should find a resting-place for its blue beret-ed head on many a library table.

Nacio is the brother of Esteban Urruty who married the American girl in "Basquerie" and of Bette who married John de Maytie—in the "Book of Bette." But Nacio marries no one. His affairs are harmless and amusing. The first episode concerns his mistake in accepting as the lily maid of Astolat a certain broad-moraled artist model whom he discovers romantically confined in a chateau nearby. He attempts to rescue her but is rescued from her by his family. His second adventure begins more successfully. He rescues by aeroplane a beautiful American lady and brings her to a little rural shelter near his home. But this lady has a husband and a baby. When she returns to America, she leaves her baby to Nacio. And this is Nacio's real affair.

There are happenings, happenings, all the way. Nacio is nearly married to a lady in a harem, he is kidnapped by Arab sheiks, and his beloved ward is coveted by a dark-skinned admirer. And all sorts of other things.

Mrs. Kelly obviously writes to amuse herself and her readers. She writes gaily and optimistically. She is not above coincidence, she is not above moralizing. And everything ends just as nearly as it should as possible. But since no one reads these books in order to discover the Basque soul, one may as well accept the Basque surface as inconsequentially as it is presented.

EARTHWORMS IN EUROPE. By WILLIAM HAZLETT UPSON. Farrar & Rinehart, 1931. \$2.

Though the brand of humor purveyed in this comic novel is consistently infantile, the book contains occasional strokes of broad satire on the American booster and his methods which are decidedly apt and laughter-provoking. Alexander Botts, who appeared last year in another Upson volume dedicated to his career as demon salesman for the Earthworm Tractor Company, is now dispatched to Europe with Gadget, his indispensable wife, to promote the sale of the machines in the old world countries. The ridiculously self-assured narratives he writes home to his boss, telling cocksurely of his repeated failures to dispose of his wares in France, Germany, Russia, Italy, compose the bulk of the book. As a high pressure go-getter abroad, Botts proves a complete failure until, providentially, Mussolini himself takes kindly to his patter and orders tractor machines from him in sufficient quantity to save him from being recalled home by his firm in disgrace. The book is best calculated to suit the light reading requirements of people who find wit in the funny strips of the daily press.

PORCELAIN AND CLAY. By HELEN R. MARTIN. Dodd, Mead, 1931. \$2.

Here is a novel which should make very entertaining reading for girls in early adolescence who haven't been brought up on realistic fiction, or for those adults who choose to forget life's monotony occasionally by believing in movie virtues and vicissitudes. It is heavy-handed romance, oversentimentalized and spiritually out-of-date.

Porcelain—a family of wealth and tradition in a present-day Connecticut community—is highly polished. So highly polished that when the poor young wife of the youngest son becomes, unwanted, a house guest at the family home, she finds no place laid for her at meals. So polished that when after a day of forced abstinence, she faces hauteur and crushing indifference rather than starve, conversation is carried on as if she were indeed still absent. So polished

that her Normal School training is ridiculed, her choice of words laughed at, her every motive suspected.

By way of contrast, "clay" is the real thing—the Pennsylvania Dutch girl so often depicted by the author—a Mary Pickford figure in this case, sweet, charming, with fair curly hair and a white skin. One who out of her social ignorance quotes Bernard Shaw to capitalists, who refuses to be even interested in her degenerate husband's half million a year, who becomes eventually belle of the aristocratic community, and marries, after her husband's ignoble desertion, his far more stable and dignified brother—a brother who nevertheless had already regarded her as a "girl of that class," and held true to "all the traditions of his race" until her demure charm demolished them. The problem as to whether the brilliant polish will be worn down, or the clay itself take on a gloss by this union, is not probed.

FALSE FACES. By THEODORE S. DRACHMAN. Newland Press, 1931. \$2.

There are frequent indications in this first novel that the author is uncertainly feeling his way and that if he in future overcomes the fault of filling interminable pages with nothing more substantial than wind, his work should call for respectful attention. Through the medium of a weak, introspective, vacillating youth of German immigrant parentage—and of course with the stream-of-consciousness method—is related the tedious, long-drawn tale of Franz Held's futile struggle for self-understanding, for an economic start in life, and for an abiding solution of the worldly and sentimental problems over which he is forever fuddling his wits. Franz, his sweetheart, whom he finally marries after endless talk and consideration of the step, his family, and his heavy-thinking chums, are a set of garrulous bores who are likely to exhaust the reader's patience before he has labored halfway through the book.

THE PREMEDITATED VIRGIN. By NALBRO BARTLEY. Farrar & Rinehart, 1931. \$2.

The flapper heroine of this frothy, artificial story—daughter of an urbane divorced couple in their forties who still maintain friendly relations—is sagely determined to manage her own life on the basis of avoiding the errors of her mother's carelessly regulated past and steering a straight course to advantageous marriage with some man she truly loves. The idea is a bright and rational one, but the successful carrying out of Mary Ann's scheme is retarded and complicated by moral obligations to frailer members of her circle, the steadfast loyalty with which she stands by the ruined sister of her fiancé, parental handicaps, and the endeavor to fit herself for a remunerative vocation. The story contains many capably drawn portraits of frivolous, shallow, average people, but the narrative is constantly padded with incidents, descriptions, and dialogue which contribute little toward development of the main theme.

NAKED ON ROLLER SKATES. By MAXWELL BODENHEIM. Liveright, 1930. \$2.

This book combines the delight in the *revolte* which was current some ten years ago, with the recent and unprecedented fondness for the purely tough. Mr. Bodenheim's characters are violently in revolt without being quite clear what they are revolting against, and Mr. Bodenheim himself seems to have some of the same difficulty in finding an oppressor. He is much concerned with lust, which he calls, with inexplicable resentment, "the old febrility, in a hundred thousand individual variations, which novelists are commanded not to dwell upon." Thackeray had some reason for uttering a similar protest against the restrictions laid upon the fulness of a novelist's powers, but any one today, especially the author of "Naked on Roller Skates," who complains that he may not write about sex, has not kept up with the progress of his own revolt.

One has somewhat the same feeling about his characters. His hero, a man of fifty-six who has knocked about all over the world and at the beginning of the book is a traveling medicine-man selling snake oil, and his heroine, a country girl who throws herself at him, saying that she wants to go with him and to be punched in the face, seem to

(Continued on next page)

New Scribner Books

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These dramatic tales of life in the fields and towns and villages of New England and the South present to the general public for the first time in book form the work of a young writer who pictures one aspect of the American scene with directness, unfaltering realism, and surprising power. His stories concern love in the springtime, courting, jealousy, a lynching, old age, a death. They are interesting, individual, authentic.

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The New Books

Fiction

(Continued from preceding page)

have no idea what they want beyond excitement. That much is excellent; every one must be able to sympathize with the hero's contempt for the poor people all around him who live and die like sheep, contented with stupid work and stupider pleasures. But the more one expects from this pair of runaways, the more one will be disappointed to find them settling down to manage a cheap quick-lunch stand in New York. For the reader, the Coffee Pot is relieved from dulness only by Mr. Bodenheim's singularly forceful and intimate presentation of an unfamiliar scene; but for the runaways who ran it, it must soon have become familiar to the point of inexpressible dreariness. There is an admixture of Harlem night life, of gangsters, and so on, but nothing that convinces one that it was worth coming so far, and pouring such scorn upon the satisfied sheep, to be satisfied with no more than that.

Mr. Bodenheim's style is notable; he writes in a lean, nervous manner that is perfectly suited to his atmosphere; it compels admiration and at the same time tries the nerves just as the pacing of a fine, unexercised wolfhound does; it deserves better matter.

A WOMAN ON HER WAY. By JOHN VAN DRUTEN. Knopf. 1931.

This book is a study in sophisticated futility, as perhaps the title will suggest. The principal character, a woman perpetually on her way from one house to another, is a member of London's Bohemia, a writer of fairly successful novels, which she regards as a way of getting a living as good as another. She was unhappily married, divorced, and left unable to bear children; at the beginning of the book she lives alone, taking occasional lovers in strict obedience to a moral code of her own. She has innumerable acquaintances whose society she enjoys, her days are always full of bursting, but she is altogether unsatisfied. She is not getting what she wants from life, and she has no idea what it is that she does want. In the course of the book she has two highly unsatisfactory love affairs, an unsatisfactory lecture tour in America, and various other unsatisfactory adventures. In the end she joins with a man in much the same situation as herself, but without much hope.

There is much that is commendable in "A Woman on Her Way," but its good qualities are chiefly negative. Although it is laid in a very fast set, it is not in the least sensational; and it also avoids the other temptation of Bohemian novels, a plethora of epigram and superficial brilliance. The people are quite convincing, and they do not try one's patience as fictitious characters are apt to do who are unhappy through no assignable reason. Not only the heroine, but all the crowd of other characters, with their spitefulness and *arrogance* and noisy emptiness, are credible and even sympathetic; one understands that having got into their squirrel cage they cannot get out. But though the people do not exhaust one's patience, the book may. There is such a multitude of actors that one gets lost among them, forgetting who is whose lover and whose *divorcé*. There is an unending succession of incidents, all in the same vein. Mr. Van Drueten has succeeded in giving the impression he intended of heartless hurrying vacuity; but it is dangerous to draw futility so large and give the reader nothing else to refresh him.

THE BORGHIAS or AT THE FEET OF VENUS. By VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ. Translated by ARTHUR LIVINGSTON. Dutton. 1930. \$3.

It is not, as you might reasonably conclude from the title, the great Renaissance Pope and his family whom Señor Ibañez has depicted as "at the feet of Venus" but an idle young scion of theirs in the twentieth century who ponders what he has learned of his ancestors in the intervals of a trite love affair. What the young Borgia gathers in sporadic fashion is that the Borgias were no worse than most of their contemporaries, only, being foreigners and unlucky in the end, the objects of more abuse. A rambling account of the great doings of the family in the sixteenth century, which fills most of the volume, is irritatingly interrupted from time to time by the heartburnings of their uninteresting young descendant. Of all the ways to sugar-coat the pill of history this is the worst. Perhaps Señor Ibañez meant thus to apologize, unnecessarily, for the amateurish and second hand quality of his investigation. Or perhaps the present volume does not represent what he would have meant at all. That is perhaps the most charitable conclusion.

History

ITALY AFTER THE RENAISSANCE: Decadence and Display in the Seventeenth Century. By LACY COLLISON-MORLEY. Holt. 1931. \$5.

This book is pretentious only in its title. Mr. Collison-Morley approaches seventeenth century Italy through the seventeenth century English travelers and his volume is a survey of what an intelligent traveler might have seen and reported of the peninsula in the days of the Spanish domination. He knows his travelers well, particularly Coryot, Evelyn, and Laselles and quotes them and the correspondence of Sir Henry Wotton frequently. And he has supplemented them with wide, if unmethodical, reading in the literature of and about the period, and with open-eyed wandering in the places they visited. His book has much of the charm and interest of a travel diary, and most of its defects.

Of the opera and the *commedia del arte*, of the pageants and carnivals, of low life in Naples and the amusements of foreigners in Venice there are illuminating little sketches in which something of the very spirit of the *seicento* is recaptured. But the method is so consistently digressive as to make it idle to speak of digressions. Even the plan of dealing in order with the principal cities and provinces is as often interrupted or departed from as adhered to; the chapters are very uneven; the style has much of the jerky, hurried quality of notes jotted in margins or scribbled in hotel writing rooms; and in the pursuit of an anecdote, the description of a costume, or the recollection of a page from "I Promessi Sposi," whatever thread of organic explanation was being followed is usually lost beyond recovery. And Mr. Collison-Morley's eye is ever that of a traveler on the grand tour, alert only for the striking, the superficial, the exterior. To our real comprehension of a place and time so important to the understanding of modern history, and so badly in need of reevaluation, now that the protestant, the romantic, and the liberal prejudices which obscured its real meaning are subsiding, he has nothing significant to contribute.

INCREDIBLE TRUTH. By IRVIN S. COBB. Cosmopolitan. 1931. \$2.50.

This seems to be a collection of syndicated newspaper articles which might better have been (and probably once were) called something like "Great Events of History as Contemporaneously Reported." With the fellow interest of a reporter, Mr. Cobb has selected some thirty-odd primary source narratives dealing with critical occurrences, the doings of great men, the course of famous events. Here are some of the most celebrated of eyewitness stories—Captain Scott's diary, Pliny's report of the eruption of Vesuvius, Russell's story of the battle of Bull Run, the log of Columbus's voyage, and so on. For reasons of space they have usually had to be abridged, however, and on the whole they probably suffer by it. Also, while some of these stories are the work of great reporters, none of them is more coherent and vivid than Tacitus's account of the death of Agrippina, which despite the compiler's comment was not the work of an eyewitness, but of a critical historian working sixty years after the event. Surely Mr. Cobb, as an old newspaperman, would have admitted that a competent rewrite man can make a much better story (however it may differ from what actually happened) than the average eyewitness.

THE WHITE ARMY. By GENERAL A. DENIKINE. Translated from the Russian by CATHERINE ZVEGINZOV. Cape-Smith. 1930.

Outside of Russia the heroic though sad epic of the White Army is little known. The struggle in which that army was engaged fighting against the "Bolshevist enslavement" was overshadowed by the events of the world war and its aftermath. Yet that struggle began at the time when the Soviet Government was negotiating peace with Germany at Brest Litovsk, and it went on for two years after the Armistice on the Western front had been signed.

The volume here reviewed is the work of an author, who during two years was the commander-in-chief of the White forces subsequently called the "Armies of the South." It contains a comprehensive story of the civil war in Russia.

At the beginning of the struggle the White, or Volunteer "army" numbered only four thousand men. The first campaign was started under exceptional conditions: "A mere handful of men lost in the wide Don steppes . . . (among them) two Commanders-in-Chief of the Russian Army (in the World war) . . . with a rifle

slung over their shoulder . . . trudged through the deep snow in a winding column . . ." After the column crossed into the Kuban territory (Northern Caucasia) Cossacks began to enlist, and it was joined by a detachment. Next, the Don region rose, and the strength of the White force increased considerably. It kept on growing, despite continuous fighting against the heaviest odds, and by the Fall of 1918 rose to one hundred and sixty thousand men. At the climax of its successes the White Army advanced to a line running from Kiev to Tsaritsyn (on the Volga) and was only a hundred miles away from Moscow (at Orel). After the Armies of the South were forced to retreat from that line they kept on fighting for a year, taking the offensive on many occasions. Their retreat and final failure (in the end of 1920 the remnants of the White Army were evacuated from the Crimea) were caused not so much by the numerical superiority of the Reds, as by what was "infinitely worse"—the situation in the rear necessitating a diversion of reserves to "internal fronts." In the words of the author "the people, while detesting the Bolsheviks . . . refused to realize that the White régime was powerless to pacify and regulate within a short space of time the seething turmoil caused by this upheaval in national life."

International

I. AMERICANS. By SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA. Oxford University Press. 1931.

In an article in *Harper's* some two years ago, Señor Salvador de Madariaga observed that Americans are boys, and added that they are boys who are extraordinarily fond of having visiting uncles come to tell them stories. Now when the uncles cannot be there, they sometimes write letters, which are printed in the boys' magazines, and "First Americans" is a collection of the letters of such an uncle-in-absentia, sent back by a traveller whose wanderings in the cause of international righteousness have taken him around the shores of the North Atlantic even as those of the first writer of Epistles took him around the Mediterranean. And like the teaching of his earlier model, Señor de Madariaga's teaching is a little by direct exhortation, but mostly by parable.

The essay "World Government—a Dream or a Necessity" is of the former type, but such bits as "Bulls, Irish, Spanish, and Italian" or "Mules and Frontiers" are distinctly of the latter. The effectiveness of paradox, which is the essential effectiveness of all of Señor de Madariaga's writing, is most obvious, perhaps, in "Senator Borah vs. Senator Borah" and "I'm Alone?," but it appears throughout. The letters are, in fact, amiable commentaries on the inconsistencies of small citizenries as seen by a citizen of the world. They are dedicated to Americans of all nations, "persons," to quote the prefatory note, "who do feel the new world spirit and the new world faith, yet find it hard to part with the old tribal prejudices and cosy insularities." If the parallel of "First Americans" were followed to the end, it would appear that in the eyes of Señor de Madariaga, as in the eyes of a number of other contemporary writers, we are the Romans. The next question is, who are the Corinthians?

THE SOVIET CHALLENGE TO AMERICA. By GEORGE S. COUNTS. Day. 1931.

Professor Counts has seen a good deal of Soviet Russia, including what he saw on a long tour in a Ford car a summer or two ago. His main contention is that back of all the excesses and stupidities of Bolshevism there rises an active ideal of human equality so vital that the rest of the world may not, for its own security, much longer ignore it. Instead of trying to shut out Communism,

it must fashion an alternative program "to discipline the energies and humanize the spirit of industrial civilization."

In support of this contention, he makes a thoroughgoing analysis of the spirit and accomplishments of the Revolution in various fields, including a careful appraisal of the Five Year Plan. Dr. Counts has an instinctive urge for the twelve-pound word and for turning into polysyllabic abstractions the simple and concrete. If books about Russia were not sprouting from every bush, his might be regarded as an unusually welcome and useful work. Possibly it is, anyway. But with so much that is lively and interesting being written about Russia and the Russians, and so much that is interesting and lively to write, there are undoubtedly limits to a writer's permissible business.

Philosophy

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF INTELLIGENCE AND WILL. By H. G. WYATT. Harcourt, Brace. 1930.

What is intelligence? is coming to replace the ancient query: What is truth? Mr. Wyatt contributes a critical study, much of it of interest to the professional psychologist only. But it deals with fundamentals. The behaviorist's use of the stimulus-response formula ignores the problem; the Gestaltist makes an important correction; both, along with Thurstone and Thorndyke, miss the point by neglecting the relevancy of the relations that bring solutions. Intelligence derives from the instincts; impulse and intelligence divide the field between them. But the driving power of the impulse takes the issue over to the will, as its relevant direction reaches up to intelligence.

Much of Mr. Wyatt's thesis is by way of protest to the easy and misleading solutions popular in simplified psychology. He reinstates consciousness, and finds it necessary to place the trend toward intelligence as itself a datum of the biological equipment. As an initial critique it is helpful; the next stage is a constructive incorporation of this corrected view of intelligence into an educational program.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX. By ERWIN WEXBERG. Translated by W. BERAN WOLFE. Farrar & Rinehart. 1931. \$2.50.

In view of current parodies, one may well ask, "Are more books on sex necessary?" Confusion is unavoidable, for the advice is discordant. The Freudians are responsible for putting sex so conspicuously on the map; formerly a province, it is now a continent. Dr. Wexberg and his translator, Dr. Wolfe, are Adlerians. They reject as completely as the orthodox psychiatrist the Freudian sexualization of the entire stream of vital energy and the description of the stages of unfoldment in sex terms. Oedipus and castration and incest are relegated to psycho-mythology. The sexual life is regarded as one of the major fields of social adjustment; as the most intimate and pervasive, its significance is profound. It takes its place in the total adjustment of the individual to the total goal of his activities. A sex handicap or frustration or perversion engenders an inferiority feeling and may lead to neuroses. On the constructive side the redemption of sex is love, which is a psychic infusion and a high-grade product of cultural evolution. The general trend of the exposition is toward a commonsense view of the lovelife and an avoidance of the psychoanalytic extremes. By the same token there is a tendency toward posing as scientific what has only the warrant of a system of interpretation of the psychic urges, which is partial at best. This Adlerian view of sex psychology serves to clarify the divergences of Freud and his dissenting followers.

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