

# The New Books

## Fiction

**FOUR ROADS TO DEATH.** By Benjamin Appel. Knopf. 1935. \$2.

Mr. Appel has written a brilliant and highly artificial story of an imaginary expedition into the great deserts of Central Asia.

It is a story of greed and self-exploitation from beginning to end, but of a greed that through a curious flaw in Mr. Appel's method has little root in the characters that succumb to it, and whose deeper implications are either lost or fumbled. The desperate, driven creatures who reel and stumble through his pages poisoned by their own primitive appetites have little to do with life and still less, one may suppose, with the desert of Mr. Appel's creation. They are phantoms, one and all, hard-boiled to be sure, but lost forever and forever wandering in the strange, mirage-like quality of these pages.

The opening chapter of this book has a transfiguring liveliness and entertainment. Mr. Appel makes an impressive case for the folly and exhibitionism that underlie a good many highly advertised attempts to sell the wilderness to the home-folks. Here, in its own home setting, within the confines of the city built in the image of a thousand pathological success stories, Mr. Appel might have

picked his way thoughtfully through the trumpery and ineptitudes of the Jensen-Enbright Asiatic expedition to a complete realization of its human background. But he must follow them into the wilderness and lose them there, not so much the victims of their own dehumanized folly as of his own brittle extravagance.

E. L.

**THE FARM AT PARANAO.** By Laurence Kirk. Doubleday, Doran. 1935. \$2.

Although it is billed as a psychological horror story like the author's previous "Whispering Tongues," this reviewer found Mr. Kirk's new book predominantly a shrewd and amusing light novel of character. The author works hard to build up the suspense; and when Fanny, the Jane Austenesque girl from the small English town, goes out to South America to marry the mysterious Keith Buchanan, one expects an immediate disaster. Some readers may think that the result does justify the suspense. This reader did not; even the later excitement, which comes at the very end, seemed a slight anticlimax after all the preparation.

But the point is that, anyhow, "The Farm at Paranao" is a very readable and entertaining novel. It contains some excellent caricatures of typical English tourists; Fanny, the heroine, is independent

and engaging; and Keith, her fiancé on the Brazilian farm, of whom we know so little for so long, turns out to be an interesting surprise. Altogether it's a highly superior time-killer.

G. S.

**HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY.** By Sheila Fitzgerald. Harpers. 1935. \$2.

A feud between two families is dramatized in this clever first novel and is particularly enhanced by a Hungarian setting. The story moves rather slowly, at first, through the childhood misadventures of the wilful and beautiful Margit Horvath and the three young Ehrenfelds, but it soon gathers speed and plunges rapidly into Paul Ehrenfeld's tragic infatuation for Margit and his tubercular brother Bela's amorous escapades. This English author seems to have a lively sympathy for the Hungarian temperament. She adroitly skims the surface of the many personalities involved in her scheme of hatred and love, and her characterizations, though superficial, are very graphic.

The book is written with verve and abandon. The gay feasts and sensuous love-making in luxurious surroundings make intoxicating reading. But the Danube-severed beauties of Budapest and the fertile charms of the Ehrenfelds' rich country estate are so enchanting that they actually distract one's attention from the tragic implications of the plot. The book has the quality of light opera—fascinating but immaterial. After a while the rose-tinted, bourgeois atmosphere becomes a trifle cloying and it is surprisingly easy to lay this attractive novel to one side.

D. P.

## Miscellaneous

**SEXUAL LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME.** By Otto Kiefer. Dutton. 1935. \$5.

**MEN AND WOMEN.** By Magnus Hirschfeld. Putnams. 1935. \$4.

Many, many books have been written on the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire. In "Sexual Life in Ancient Rome," Mr. Kiefer asserts "that true Christian ideals cannot be allied to a mighty power like the Roman Empire, and that they did in fact play their part in undermining that structure from within and eventually causing its disintegration." Taking the sexual life as presenting the best and fullest picture of the "drives" that characterized the ancient Romans, he finds it compounded of sadism and sensuality. Sadism was inherent in the attitudes, ideas, and institutions of Rome, and Mr. Kiefer stresses its role in education, in the leisure activities, and in the insatiable cruelty of the mob. Sensuality, Mr. Kiefer's other component, he finds reflected in their love poetry, their institutions of marriage, concubinage, and prostitution, and in their religious and philosophic speculations. Whether expressed heterosexually or homosexually Mr. Kiefer feels that sensuality is a base product. In their love the Romans rose no higher than the physical act. Neither the mind nor the "soul" was involved. But there was no degeneration. Their sadism and sensuality were a constant and integral part of the Roman ethos to be found in the early days as well as during the Empire. It was

"The Best Writing in the English Language"  
—N. Y. HERALD  
TRIBUNE

CARL  
VAN DOREN'S

*An Anthology of*  
**WORLD PROSE**

"Here are over one million words of prose, most of them the best that have ever been committed to paper, parchment, papyrus, silk or tablets of stone; drawn from the last forty centuries"—*N. Y. Herald Tribune Books*. "If you are packing your bag for a Summer vacation, you can include no volume with more profit than AN ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD PROSE"—*N. Y. Times Book Review*.

\$3.50

1,582 Pages  
More Than A  
Million Words

PUBLISHERS  
**REYNAL &  
HITCHCOCK**  
386 Fourth Ave.  
New York

Christianity that brought disintegration. "It would seem to be true that the Romans changed their attitude to love, marriage, and sexual life as the conditions of their world changed—the man who has found in Jesus's teachings a new attitude to life and humanity learns new opinions and new values in love also; and that change is far from degeneration."

A brief conclusion at the end of the book presents a mystically phrased plea. Mr. Kiefer believes that there are certain parallels between our civilization and Roman. He is not a preacher who finds us fallen on evil days; he is a special pleader who would have us turn from the values we hold to those phrased so simply by Jesus. This high purposive tone pervades the book. Mr. Kiefer also makes free use of "obvious laws" and "natural assumptions" which to the reviewer are far from such.

Magnus Hirschfeld in "Men and Women" describes a journey he made around the world some years ago. He pictures the fair cities he visited and the fine hotels where he stopped. He lists the people he met and the places of beauty he beheld. As founder of the Institute of Sexology in Berlin, he was also professionally interested in red light districts, prostitutes, and homosexuals, and touches briefly and casually on those marriage and social institutions that differ from ours.

J. M.

*A HANDBOOK OF FIST PUPPETS.* By Bessie A. Ficklen. Stokes. 1935. \$2.75.

Guignol at last has a champion in America, a discerning and delightful champion in the person of Bessie Alexander Ficklen. With all due regard for the graceful limbs and magic strings of the marionette, here is an open preference for the more vital, more dramatic hand puppet. What surprising life, what amazing intimacy, what an immediate appeal has that simple old *Punch* who neither teaches nor preaches but whose drama outlives every moral and magnificent marionette that was ever contrived!

"The fist puppet's greatest asset," Mrs. Ficklen claims, "is his *direct action*. His movements are firm, purposeful, accurate, and effortless." George Sand, she continues, greatly preferred the fist puppet to the string-controlled marionette. "She delighted in the fact that her hand was in its body, and its soul was her soul, and she and the puppet absolutely one."

Mrs. Ficklen cites other illustrious devotees of hand puppets, but her own love of Guignol dates from her nursery days. She grew up playing with fist puppets and she has a sure and easy familiarity with their technique and with their Puckish ways. She offers a dozen tempting descriptions of how to make and manipulate them. If you have—or if you haven't—any ingenuity, just read her pleasant chapters on heads, arms, costumes, or booths—and set to work on a puppet play. No home or school, it seems, need be without one.

Certainly for younger children the fist puppets are easier to work than the string-controlled marionettes. And for audiences, young and old, the quick humor and direct pathos of these hand puppets are little less than a miracle of the drama.

H. H. J.

## Philosophy

*THE FATE OF MAN IN THE MODERN WORLD.* By Nicholas Berdyaev. Morehouse Publishing Co. 1935. \$1.25.

Published immediately after the author's "Freedom and Spirit" this little book is a great disappointment, not because of its brevity but because it is by comparison with the latter of little consequence and needlessly repetitious. The book is really a footnote to Berdyaev's interpretation of modern history as fully developed in "The End of Our Time." The footnote is added chiefly to interpret fascism and Nazism as symptoms of decay, with communism, of modern civilization. Berdyaev regards this decadence as due to the dissolution of the humanism which had its rise in the Renaissance and which

found itself unable to maintain itself without the supporting faith of Christianity. Modern man substituted faith in man for faith in God. The anarchy of modern technical civilization robs man of faith in himself. He tries to save his life from meaninglessness by setting up the state, the race, and the nation as objects of worship; but this sacrifices the dignity of the human spirit. Berdyaev pleads for a Christianity which will again weld theism and humanism together. He is therefore equally opposed to non-religious humanism and to the Barthian theology which destroys the humanistic element in Christian theism.

Berdyaev claims to see signs of the return of the type of faith which he desires but he adduces no evidence of its revival.

R. N.

**Patrick Balfour saw this sign on a sandwich man in London. The result was an unusual record of travel to the Far East.**

**TO INDIA  
BY ROLLS-ROYCE  
CAR FOR £34  
LEAVING OCTOBER 18**

Mr. Balfour set forth with one of the strangest caravans that ever headed Eastwards. Two Rolls-Royce cars, with an assortment of occupants, drove to India by way of Syria, Iraq, Persia and Afghanistan. It was a tumultuous experience, but Mr. Balfour, unwearied by it all, plunged further eastwards; by pony into Nepal; by man-of-war to the Andaman Islands; by train to Malaya and Siam; by river steamer to Indo-China. This book is the spontaneous record, filled with humor and keen observation, of the journey. It is reviewed as (in the *N. Y. Times*) "a whimsical book about a grand tour, and a grand book about a whimsical tour . . . one of the most readable books of the year;" and as (in the *N. Y. Herald Tribune*) "endlessly good entertainment." \$3.75

**BY PATRICK BALFOUR**

# Grand Tour

WITH 79 MAGNIFICENT ILLUSTRATIONS

**HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY**

**383 Madison Avenue, New York**

# The Clearing House

CONDUCTED BY AMY LOVEMAN

*Inquiries, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, should be directed to Miss Loveman, in care of The Saturday Review.*

## A BALANCED RATION FOR A WEEK'S READING

**THE WATER GYPSIES.** By A. P. Herbert. *Doubleday, Doran.*  
**THE SEA AND THE JUNGLE.** By H. M. Tomlinson. *Harpers.*  
**ENGLAND, THE UNKNOWN ISLE.** By Paul Cohen-Portheim. *Dutton.*

## Some Detective Stories

L. A. of Chicago, Ill., is evidently planning a detective story reading campaign and he wants books of the sort that are scientific and devoted to the unravelling of mysteries rather than to side issues. He seems to have a leaning toward Scotland Yard, and wants volumes with great detectives like Sherlock Holmes.

**A** LAS and alack, there is only one Sherlock Holmes and all others of his profession who have followed since are puny in comparison with that giant of the mystery tale. But if L. A. really wants to address himself to literature of the kind he still will find plenty to

## BREAD LOAF WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Tenth Annual Session  
August 15-29

Bread Loaf Inn, Vermont

**JOHN MASON BROWN**  
formerly Associate Editor and Dramatic Critic of the *Theatre Arts Monthly*, now Dramatic Critic of the *New York Evening Post*, will have charge of work in playwriting. Other staff members: Julia Peterkin, novelist; Gladys Hasty Carroll, novelist; John Crowe Ransom, poet; Bernard DeVoto, fiction writer; Raymond Everitt, literary agent.

LECTURES  
OPEN FORUMS  
PERSONAL CONSULTATIONS ON MANUSCRIPTS

*All Inquiries:*  
H.G. Owen, Middlebury College  
Middlebury, Vermont

read which even if not up to the standard of the immortal Sherlock is nevertheless excellent entertainment. Besides seeking out more recent works he would do well to turn back to those masters of detective fiction, Poe and Gaboriau, and to read, too, Wilkie Collins's *THE MOONSTONE* and *THE WOMAN IN WHITE* (both of them come in inexpensive editions issued by the Oxford University Press). Another excellent book for him to gather in is *THE OMNIBUS OF CRIME* (Harcourt, Brace), by Dorothy Sayers, and while he's about it he might as well get *THE SECOND OMNIBUS OF CRIME* also. Willard Huntington Wright has edited a collection entitled *THE GREAT DETECTIVE STORIES* (Scribners) which would also serve as a convenient means of making the acquaintance of some of the better known detectives.

Among these gentlemen of the sleuthing profession one who many years ago won a wide public and who not long since made another appearance was Mr. Ebenezer Gryce, he, who never looking direct at a person or object, always sees everything that is necessary to observe about it. It is said that Anna Katherine Green wrote *THE LEAVENWORTH CASE* (Putnam) in which he first appeared to disprove the statement that a woman could never write a good detective story. She gave the lie to that statement triumphantly, and her sex has continued not only to be prolific writers of the mystery tale, but highly popular ones. Indeed some of the most successful detective novels of recent years have been the work of women, as L. A. will discover if he reads such stories as Mary Roberts Rinehart's *THE MAN IN LOWER TEN* and *THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE* (both Grosset & Dunlap), Agatha Christie's *THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD* (whose agile, bewigged M. Poirot with his English interlarded with French idiom is one of the detectives who reappear regularly in his creator's works), Mignon Eberhart's *THE PATIENT IN ROOM 18* (Doubleday, Doran), and the long list of excellent stories by Dorothy Sayers which includes among the latest the delightful *THE NINE TAILORS* (Harcourt, Brace).

If L. A. wants particularly scientific tales which are original and sustainedly interesting, and which have a detective who figures in one after the other of them, he can do no better than to read R. Austin Freeman's Dr. Thorndyke tales (Dodd, Mead). The books of S. S. Van Dine (Scribners) have been extremely successful, and, in a story as good as *THE CANARY MURDER CASE*, deservedly so. Mr. Van Dine, who is no other than the Willard Huntington Wright who collected *THE GREAT DETECTIVE STORIES* I mentioned before, has an irritating habit of embroidering his story with erudition, and his amateur detective, Philo Vance, sometimes becomes intolerable by reason of his desire to display his learning. Still the stories are among the more notable of recent

years. I mustn't forget either, even in a brief summary like the foregoing, to mention the works of Freeman Wills Crofts, H. C. Bailey, and R. A. J. Walling. There are any number of others which might just as well be noted, but I'll leave them for some future day when it isn't so hot that I'm anxious to get back to the comfort of an easy chair, a breeze from the river, and the latest unopened detective story on my table. But one more postscript before I stop. L. A. should read G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown stories and when he wants a particular evening of delight A. A. Milne's *THE RED HOUSE MYSTERY* (Dutton). Which reminds me that Roy Octavus Cohen's *THE CRIMSON ALIBI* (Dodd, Mead), is a grand story. But if anybody suggests Edgar Wallace I'm agin him.

## More Information

From Carroll R. Williams, Jr., of Baltimore, Md., comes the following letter full of information:

I have read with interest your suggestions to R. M. B. concerning the literature of weather.

Since R. M. B. seems to have an interest similar to mine, except that his includes teaching, it is possible that he might find instructive or enjoyable some of the publications that I have come in contact with.

First, there is William Ferrel's "A Popular Treatise on the Winds" (John Wiley & Sons, 1898), which is one of the great granddaddies. In spite of its name it is scarcely "popular" in the modern sense, for the author goes to the root of things and develops the physical and mathematical formulae involved in the circulation of the atmosphere.

A standard work is "Meteorology," by W. I. Milham (Macmillan), a textbook which covers the subject with economy and clarity and includes chapters on weather bureaus and forecasting, in addition to descriptions and discussions of instruments, principles, and phenomena.

With the recent expansion of commercial aviation a number of books have appeared which are oriented to aeronautics, some of which include discussions of comparatively new theories and concepts, "air masses," for example.

In the welter of politics, economics, and the New Deal the really fine work being done by such government agencies as the Coast and Geodetic Survey, the Hydrographic Office, and the Weather Bureau is often overlooked and their valuable (but inexpensive) publications neglected. The U. S. Weather Bureau publishes a number of periodicals and special documents (in addition to the daily weather maps). "A list of these publications may be had by application to the Chief, U. S. Weather Bureau, Washington, D. C." I can highly recommend the *Monthly Weather Review* as a fascinating periodical, containing charts, tables, and miscellaneous data in addition to numerous articles reporting local and general phenomena, in which the meteorologists discuss their work, problems, and theories in a manner that, while often technical, is extremely stimulating if one is interested in the "cause of rainfall, prevailing winds, climate, cyclones, tornadoes, etc." The annual subscription is \$1.50. Publication is about three months later than the nominal date.

All of the books I have mentioned contain bibliographies and the *Review* each month gives a rather complete list of current publications.