RECENT BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

ANONYMITY is, as a rule, reprehensible; for the author thereby neatly "passes the buck" to his publisher, letting the latter shoulder the burden of reproof forthcoming from irate "persons in the public eye" (the public being notoriously neglectful of the removal of a veritable lumberyard of scantlings from its gullible optic!). And once every quarter of a century or so, the public eye needs to be taken out and scraped, the rods straightened and the cones decarbonized so that it may discern the difference between a hocus pocus versemonger and a real poet. "A Critical Fable" by A Poker of Fun (Houghton Mifflin) is a crisp satire on twenty-one modern poets of recognized standing. It is a rhymed eyewash for the alleviation of poetic astigmatism. It removes the mote that is in thine own eye, so that thou canst see clearly the beams that befog the artistic vision of such poetic brass bands as Amy Lowell and Vachel Lindsay — the latter being characterized as "a mighty jazz dancer before the Lord!" Whoever is responsible for "A Critical Fable" (and we have a suspicion that his own name is "hit off" in the book) has achieved a new and peculiarly perspicuous approach to the shortcomings of some of our modern poets.

Perhaps as many people have poohpoohed Professor Einstein's theory of relativity as have guffawed stupidly at the multifarious mother-in-law wheezes, and this without the slightest conception of what the theory is all about. However, serious minded persons, who realize that any new theory which causes as great a furor in scientific circles as has relativity must have some foundation in fact, will want to have at least a general idea of the nature and scope of this mysterious subject. "Relativity For All' by Herbert Dingle (Little, Brown) is a primer devoid of all abstruse technicalities and mathemati-

cal involvements. As the theory is essentially mathematical, the book cannot be entirely specific, but it will give him who is willing to apply himself diligently a fair conception of one of the most revolutionary ideas ever conceived. The book is stiff reading — is a compact treatise to be read only when the mind is clear and free from interruptions. But it will cause wideawake, original thinkers to give Professor Einstein's hypothesis more than passing attention.

The litter of essays pretentiously christened "Literature and Life" (Dutton) by E. B. Osborn presents the depressing spectacle of a naturally pedantic fellow attempting to be One of the Boys — the professorial literary editor of the London "Morning Post" masquerading as a journalistic Puck. As well have Arthur Brisbane do the lyrics for the next Winter Garden opera. Mr. Osborn is at his commonplace best when writing of Vachel Lindsay, whom he admires tremendously, or London. Let him tilt at such gay and engaging subjects as "Beer, Noble Beer", "New Cardgames", or "Christmas Presents", and he is immediately handicapped by an equipment that was never intended for such frothy discourses. Despite the promise of his list of contents, here is a bookish soul who should stick to his sombre toned essays on "English Folk Songs" and "The Anatomy of Wit". Indeed he might do well to concentrate upon a study of the latter. His humor never quite comes off.

After reading Harry Vardon's book it should be comparatively simple for you to go out and chop half a dozen strokes from your medal score. In "The Gist of Golf" (Doran) the five time champion of England does for the inveterate (or initiate) golfer precisely what Izaak Walton did for the angler. The mashie master has written, or more probably has caused to be written at his dictation, an enlightening handbook on the sport of kings and duffers. Elementary procedure is taken up, as well as more sophisticated shots, all of which is unobtrusively interlarded with a wealth of interesting personal anecdote and reminiscences. Vardon has posed for a series of illustrative photographs so that he who runs without reading may know just how to make use of each club.

The essays contained in "Chameleon, Being the Book of My Selves" (Lieber, Lewis), are quite typical of Benjamin De Casseres's outlook and methods. His is a gift of discovering the exotic in the commonplace and leaving it commonplace. He would consider things in terms of the cosmos; in fact his book is a collection of strained aphorisms, pseudo-philosophy of the dullest and most bromidic sort.

Signs have not been wanting in recent years that intelligent, unprovincial Americans are becoming more and more distrustful of the received interpretations of American history. The compilers of the school histories have been under fire as possessing too much of the patriotic enthusiasm of Stephen Decatur's dictum, "Our country right or wrong", and too little intellectual conscience. Quite in the new spirit is Claude H. Van Tyne's "The Causes of the War of Independence" (Houghton Mifflin) which examines the growth of our independent national spirit with the integrity and method of the scientific historian. The pleasant, familiar truths about our sturdy, self-reliant, God-fearing ancestry are tempered

with an unprejudiced exposition of other qualities of which we have heard less: their obstinate provincialism, and the determined obstructionist attitude of the colonial assemblies in their relationship with the representatives of the crown. Two subsequent volumes are planned to carry the story through the war for independence, and the successful achievement of the Constitution of the United States.

"All That Matters" (Reilly, Lee) will be an unexpected delight to those who enjoy the poetry of Edgar A. Guest. In it he has collected their favorites since 1920, illustrating them with full page drawings by W. T. Benda, Harvey Emrich, and others. To enthusiasts this is sufficient enticement. The rest of us will tactfully withdraw. We admit we have never been stirred by "Forgetful Pa", "Bread and Gravy", and "Winding the Clock". These are homely themes, indisputably supplying a "common touch", but considered from Mr. Guest's angle, their inspiration still eludes us.

Not a schoolboy but can tell you much of the life and works of George Washington, the father of his country. But of Geoffrey Chaucer, whose name is vaguely known to multitudes, few can say when he flourished, what he wrote, or can ever boast of having read a line written by the father of the English language. To Chaucer, as to Homer of old, belongs the palm for crystallizing a Babel of dialects into a united smooth whole, than which there has never been a more adaptable or universal language. "Chaucer and His England" by G. G. Coulton (Dutton) outlines the historical, social, and etymological events which paved the way for Chaucer's great work. It searches into the nooks and crannies of the man's life and works often unilluminated by the highlights of popular treatises — searches in a leisurely, yet painstaking way.

While the proper treatment of the criminal is no new question to those who seriously consider the various problems which have complicated civilization, a book which presents and proceeds to discuss in an intelligent manner the elements of criminology is always of a definite value and fills an emphatic need. Of such is Clarence Darrow's "Crime: Its Cause and Treatment" (Crowell), in which the author urges that the criminal be regarded as a sick man rather than as a wrongdoer. The book has evidently been written for and should be recommended to those who are not inclined to consider crimes in the light of a natural result of existing social conditions.

In "Ancient Britain, the Cradle of Civilization" (Hillis-Murgotten) George H. Cooper seeks to prove that the biblical Eden was situated in England; that Daniel, Homer, Plato, the Hebrew prophets, the Mississippi valley mound builders, and the race which inhabited Mexico in antiquity were all either of British extraction, or influenced by the early inhabitants of this remarkable isle. The author has accomplished this staggering task, one might almost say, singlehanded. Without first-hand knowledge of the classical languages, of archæology or anthropology, and with a slender bibliography in which the Encyclopædia Britannica figures prominently, the author has pierced the black night of antiquity and overturned the historians and anthropologists to his complete and evident satisfaction.

The name of Otto Jespersen stands for all that is thoroughgoing in the study of languages, and his recent "Language; Its Nature, Development and Origin" (Holt) emphasizes why this Danish scholar's reputation extends throughout the civilized world. Professor Jespersen is no stranger to Americans interested in the growth and development of language, for not only have his previous books on the subject contributed greatly to the knowledge of philology, but the series of lectures he delivered in this country gave rich opportunity for making acquaintance with a personality that has proved no small factor in establishing his literary reputation. It is fitting that Professor Jespersen has dedicated his new book to that other noted scholar at Copenhagen University, Professor Vilhelm Thomsen.

It is perhaps too much to expect that any elderly, distinguished gentleman can today still find some new thing to say to college undergraduates. J. M. Barrie acquiesces charmingly to this view of the matter in his rectorial address to the undergraduates of St. Andrews University, "Courage" (Scribner), and proceeds gently and mellowly to rehearse some of the encouraging and disheartening facts about humanity. He concludes that salvation in this life comes not by grace, but from courage. "It is the lovely virtue — the rib of Himself that God sent down to His children."

You may squirm if you like, but Cardinal Goodwin, as a professor of history, will insist on your whole attention for a study of the development of "The Trans-Mississippi West" (Appleton). There is no avoiding this, as he has undertaken to give a serious, analytical account, eliminating all choice bits such as riding the plains, Indian attacks, and round ups. These have been replaced mostly with purchase dates and maps. It is a history for careful and exhaustive reading, and as such is a merited success. Only it seems a pity that it weighs the facts so closely, and concerns itself so little with human elements and the spirit that made the west.

Those of us who mourn the lack, in most modern literature, of a high and serious purpose, will find relief in the autobiographical opus of Secretary of Labor Davis. "The Iron Puddler or My Life in the Rolling Mills and What Came of It" (Bobbs-Merrill) is not only serious and purposeful in aim but even takes the trouble to point out its moral at the end of each chapter. Not since the days of the late lamented Horatio Alger, Jr. has the youth who loved his mother, feared his God, and enjoyed his honest toil, triumphed so righteously and so blatantly over the "yellow curs" who would live without the aid of those "Proverbs-Commandments-Golden Rule"—(and platitudes?) which Mr. Davis considers the end as they are the beginning of life. All of which proves that conservatism may be as passionate a creed as the reddest of radicalism.

> Baby cries for the moon in vain,
> Or he chases through the lane

swings with the same jerky rhythm to be found throughout "Marie Tello Phillips' Book of Verses" (Clark, Fritts). In this poem it apears that the unhappy baby frolicked down the lane without finding anything. Not unlike him, one searches unsucessfully for a possibility of interest, originality of thought, any richness of metaphor in the verses. Hope is often the main theme, and one gladly enters into

this spirit, but invariably feels it slipping away, after the first few lines.

"Italian Romance Writers" by Joseph S. Kennard (Brentano) will be welcome to students of comparative literature. The book does not pretend to be exhaustive or to go into historical detail, but it enables one to get a fleeting glimpse of the qualities peculiar to each of fourteen authors — to appraise their merits and their effect upon Italian literature as a whole. Dr. Kennard has inoculated his work with a serum of mellifluousness (that quality which permeates Italian literature, art, and music), his book meandering along in limpid, colorful language, showing a keen sense of comparative values despite the apparent romantic nonchalance of style.

In "The Reform of Education" by Giovanni Gentile (Harcourt, Brace) we have a philosophical discussion of education, its shortcomings and their remedies. It is a scholarly work, coherent, lucid, logical, and, as opposed to many so called "reform" works, is not characterized by a plethora of glittering generalities. The author gets down to cases, points out glaring faults in our modern educational systems, and suggests plausible and practical substitutes. Dr. Gentile, as a professor in the University of Rome, speaks with authority, and his treatise should appeal strongly to all interested in effective education.

"The Women of Gael" (Stratford) by James F. Cassidy carries the idealization of womanhood about as far as it can be carried. Each daughter of Erin, his thesis seems to be, has been a wife of Cæsar and never, never has there been a Mrs. Potiphar on the shamrocked soil.

Hippolyte Gruener's "Chemistry" (Harper) is the first of a new series on scientific subjects. These are to be treated in a manner authoritative, yet interesting to the layman. Chemistry is the study of matter: its nature and composition; the changes it undergoes; the causes of these changes; the energy mutations involved, and the laws governing them. Professor Gruener's work is a readable, logical exposition of a big subject. The definitions are good, the text matter generously illustrated. The book is essentially modern, such current topics as Madame Curie's lectures on radium, the widely discussed questions of food adulteration and preservatives, and the much advertised matter of vitamines all receiving attention. The glossary and various tables of elements add decidedly to its value as a work of reference.

Whatever private opinions we may hold about the sapience of the group of lawmakers now drawing their salaries at Washington, we have only admiration for those statesmen of 1787 who drew up our national constitution. Weak though it may be in spots, it is the most successful yet enacted, and the model for many the world over. To understand it is essential to a liberal education. In "The Constitution of the United States" (Little, Brown) Thomas James Norton has analyzed the great document simply but completely, for the ordinary citizen, his newly enfranchised wife, and his high school son. This is the first book, the author claims, which has treated the subject in this easy, comprehensible way.

Glenn Ward Dresbach's new book of verse "In Colors of the West" (Holt) is a trifle better than the average run

of local American poetry. The tone of the book is irritating because of its impassivity. No particular mood or color of the west is revealed in its lines. Turning from native rhythms Dresbach adopts a classical form, speaking of "the domes of Nineveh and Tyre" which seems inadequate for the broad sweep of the country he wishes to describe. Now and then he captures an elusive shade which leads the reader away a bit from consecutively shallow water. But these coups are few and far between. Though the verses are neither stale nor heavy, there is no noticeable freshness or delicacy of touch about the rhythms. The workmanship is very often conscious. Most of the lyrics, however, are easy reading. The longer poems for the most part have more substance and are the best work in the book. "In Colors of the West" is like the calm, unrippled surface of a pool which does not look particularly cool or inviting.

No, you can't learn golf by sitting in an easy chair, reading what others say about it. Only by good, hard practice can you attain proficiency. Yet when Edward Ray speaks, he's a dub indeed who wouldn't listen. So it is to be expected that the experts, as well as all the wouldbes, will read the open champion's "Golf Clubs and How to Use Them" and its companion volume, "Driving, Approaching, Putting" (McBride). You will want to, too! Furthermore, P. Fowlie has described in detail all the essentials of the golf swing in his "The Science of Golf" (McBride). This book, which he aptly subtitles "A Study in Movement", will appeal also to the advanced player. It is interestingly written and well illustrated. To the man of mature age, struggling with his golf problems, "Golf for Occasional Players" (McBride) will be an attractive help. It is penned anonymously, yet sympathetically, by one who styles himself A Veteran. All four books show clearly that it is the swing, and not the actual hit, that counts; and that form is paramount. They will provide inspiration for every golfer.

The Reverend George A. Kreidel's "Notes of a Catholic Biologist" (Herder) illustrates the interesting change in the attitude of the Catholic Church toward science. The author is a member of several American scientific societies, and gives accurate accounts of many natural phenomena. These, however, are but the manifestations of "an Almighty God, who foresaw and arranged everything from the beginning". And the mystery surrounding the origin of the world and of life is solved by the postulation of a supernatural creation. This is so in the first case because the opposite is unthinkable (a simple *non sequitur* from perfectly true data), and in the second because the opposite can as yet not be proved.

Giovanni Papini is the Menckenesque bad boy of contemporary Italian literature. His audacious originality and iconoclastic slashings have made him the most talked about writer in modern Italy. "Four and Twenty Minds" (Crowell), a collection of twenty-four literary essays garnered from three earlier books, "24 Cervelli", "Stroncature", and "Testimonianze", covers such a characteristically diverse array of subjects as Dante, Gourmont, Cervantes, Maeterlinck, Swift, Nietzsche, and Shakespeare. Papini's pages are illumined with flashes of irony, and freshened by outbursts of young enthusiasm. An es-

sentially intuitive critic, impatient with definitions and classifications, he is relentless in his onslaught on the metaphysicians, Croce and Hegel. But he is as violent in his loves as in his hatreds and he grows infectiously lyrical over Whitman and Kwang-Tse.

In 1670, at the height of the fashionable craze over magic and charlatanry, the Abbé de Villars wrote "Le Comte de Gabalis", mainly for the purpose of supporting Catholic dogmas and wholesome moral principles. This story has been translated with a commentary by Lotus Dudley (Macoy). It is prefaced by a warning to "him whose quest is the gratification of a selfish intellectualism" to "beware its pages, for this is a book of hidden mystery and power". Its purpose is to reveal to the Freemason, the Cabalist, and the Rosicrucian "the unifying Light-Truth which underlies the great religions of all ages". Those not seeking light will find in the book a delightful, fantastic tale well told, a naïve mixture of strange truth and stranger fiction.

One of the most widespread faiths of our social organization is, and has been, the faith in the power of education; the conviction that general education spells progress and the ultimate solution of the problems of our existence. Robert Shafer in "Progress and Science" (Yale) expresses the belief that our mere outer education, which presents progress in the terms of materialism and neglects the inward development of man, is not the needed remedy. While science has brought a certain material form of progress, Mr. Shafer believes that, in view of the many evils which follow in the wake of each new scientific discovery and invention, it has also failed as a solution. The greater part of his energy is spent in the refutation, point by point, of the philosophies of given individuals. The tragedy of Henry Adams he explains as the inability of Adams to apply to materialism the results of his introspective conclusions; Wells is dismissed as a childlike lover of machines and organization who would educate and cure the world by clockwork. Mr. Shafer concludes with a pessimistic appreciation of the fact that the development of the soul of man, in accordance with the mechanism of events, is the one salvation of humanity.

The Latin American point of view, all too little understood this side the Gulf of Mexico, must, it would appear, have a distinct bearing upon North American plans for commercial expansion in the south and also upon the future usefulness of a diplomacy which takes for granted a virtual protectorate by the United States over South American countries. "The New Latin-America" by J. Warshaw (Crowell) is an illustrated work whose purpose it is to acquaint this country with that point of view, together with Latin America's resources, progress, civilization, and customs. The facts are well presented.

The large majority of us, while we may be keen observers, are not equipped for intelligent deduction and constructive thinking, for the reason that we lack training in various lines. This one learns soon after starting Lord Riddell's "Some Things That Matter" (Doran), an absorbing contribution to the betterment of our mental equipment. To those who desire intelligently and with least effort to brush aside impediments to their personal progress, the writer of this

brief review unqualifiedly recommends this book.

Poets speak of "divine discontent", but economist apologists for, and professional explainers of, our modern industrial order, are not so sanguine. Take Isaac H. Lionberger, chairman of the American Credit Indemnity Company, who, in an ambitious essay, "The Meaning of Property" (Stratford), deplores the prevalence of discontent among the moneyless, propertyless masses and assures them — with his tongue in his cheek — that the influences which make toward economic inequality are beneficial for the poor and rich alike. Likewise he offers that bumper crops mean prosperity for the farmer as well as the general public; that trade benefits all who engage in it, and other echoes of Adam Smith. Our present industrial organism is described as an "harmonious cooperation whose guiding principle is mutual service".

It is no sweet smelling chapter of diplomatic history which has been revealed in "The Shantung Question" (Revell) by Ge-Zay Wood, unfolding as it does step by step the seizure of Kiao-Chau Bay by Germany, the forced lease of the territory to Germany, its transfer to Japan, and the award of Shantung Province to Japan by the Versailles Peace Conference. Some hope that the world has not completely gone mad and that weak nations are not to be hopelessly dismembered by others afflicted with land lust, is recorded in the complete reversal of Shantung's fate by the Washington Conference last February. Mr. Wood's work omits nothing to prove his claim that his country was made a victim of diplomatic sharp practice and intrigue.

Probably no living man is better fitted to tell us about the mysteries of Labrador than is Wilfred T. Grenfell. Having spent most of his life there, he knows his subject thoroughly. Dr. Grenfell, in conjunction with several other authorities, depicts with vivid detail and scientific accuracy the physiographical, economic, and social conditions that obtain in "the lone, lorn widow of civilization". His book, "Labrador" (Macmillan), outlines in a most entertaining and informative manner the history, geology, industries, life in and future significance of a country which may some day be the world's chief source of minerals, coal, and other "indispensables".

A particularly clear and comprehensive book dealing with the changing Germany is Otto Manthey-Zorn's "Germany in Travail" (Marshall Jones). Professor Manthey-Zorn was granted a leave of absence by Amherst College to go abroad and study the conditions and problems of the new Central Republic. Though a piece of academic journalism, his book makes no pretenses. The two most interesting chapters are "The Berlin People and Their Theatre" and "Youth in Revolt". The heart of the book, they reveal the heart of Germany. The story of the fall of Reinhardt, the reorganization of the great Drama League, the history of the Wandervogel, the revolution of youth before the war is told in an interesting and convincing fashion. Professor Manthey-Zorn lays proper emphasis on the importance of the theatre and the younger generation in rebuilding Germany. Though his chapters on the political and economic condition of the country are conscientiously written, one can see that his heart is with the rising tide of the youth and the theatre.