Doran Book Chat

The sentence at the opening of Rebecca West's great novel, THE JUDGE, is: "Every mother is a judge who sentences the children for the sins of the father." The dedication of the novel is to Rebecca West's mother. In the 492 pages of this story I have found sustained workmanship of an austerity and a beauty that I am not afraid to compare to Thomas Hardy. I believe in THE JUDGE absolutely. It is fiction of a sort not every year produces; no, nor any writer in every book. There is room in the novel for the exhibition of a great variety of human relationships, such as the love of youthful lovers, the mutual devotion of mother and son, the lustful attitude of a very common type of man, the sweet pain and transfixing beauty of old age. These all enter into Miss West's story. And all these she knows, and can report with a simplicity of image and a quiet, controlled passion that is the hallmark of the most distinguished fiction and of such fiction only. The externally tragic circumstances toward which, with great velocity, THE JUDGE moves in its later pages, are the circumstances necessary to the most sublime effect or impression our human minds are capable of receiving — the effect or impression of tragedy in the Greek sense, an emotional purge of pity and pain, restoring to each and every one of us the power of perceiving beauty, the power of appreciating the happiness beyond unhappiness, like a cleaner earth behind the stars.

And under the stars. . . . But, with the possible exception of Edith Wharton's rather special book describing a visit, I have never until now come upon a satisfactory volume about Morocco. However, C. E. Andrews has written it in OLD MOROCCO AND THE FORBIDDEN ATLAS. Charming prose!—a fact which came to me as something of a surprise; because whenever a book is as beautifully made and illustrated as OLD MOROCCO AND THE FORBIDDEN ATLAS I have learned to expect nothing further.

W. Somerset Maugham is due in New York this month to see the first production of his new play, EAST OF SUEZ, which is appearing as a book at the same time. The play is the result of Maugham's travels in China; another result is his book of essay-sketches, ON A CHINESE SCREEN, which is also being published this fall. Maugham will do these things; I mean, he insists on going to the ends of the earth in search of material. It, the material, can be collectively described as the effect of alien surroundings upon the white

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man — the same theme which he handled so magnificently in THE MOON AND SIXPENCE. In EAST OF SUEZ he has allowed this material to assume its natural form of dramatic action with a very impressive result.

While Philip Kerr, Lloyd George's adviser in foreign affairs, was over here attending the Institute of Politics at Williams College, Williamstown, Mass., he was accused of the authorship of THE POMP OF POWER. He denied the not particularly soft impeachment, as he had previously denied it in London, where the book created a greater sensation than the "Gentleman with a Duster" was ever able to stir up. The book sets its teeth into such descriptions as those of Lloyd George and Northcliffe; it is not flattering to Philip Kerr, and it would be like Philip Kerr, in such a book, to paint himself rather critically among the lesser portraits!

Written with a lightness of touch of which I should scarcely have supposed him capable, Stewart Edward White's ON TIPTOE: A ROMANCE OF THE REDWOODS ought to entertain many thousands as readily and as completely as it entertained me. Though there is a strong element of pure fantasy in the novel, the new introductory and closing paragraphs are touched with an imaginative seriousness that I like very much indeed. A romantic story of the redwoods is not the sort of fiction to be ballasted with speculations as to the possible inventions of a not-distant future; on the other hand, one likes the fantastic to be made plausible! — as Mr. White succeeds, by just a few words fore and aft, in making it. The writing of such a tale as ON TIPTOE must have been almost as great a diversion as it is to read it.

L. P. Jacks is known as the editor of the Hibbert Journal, a magazine devoted to philosophy; as a philosopher of power and distinction; as a contributor, usually on philosophical topics, to the *Atlantic Monthly*. He should achieve a wider and more durable renown as the author of THE LEGENDS OF SMOKEOVER, just published. Smokeover is Birmingham, or Manchester, or Pittsburgh, or any modern industrial city you please; and the "legends" of the town constitute the most penetrating criticism of our modern industrial civilization that I have ever had the fortune to encounter. They are written in a fictional form with the result that this book, so profoundly philosophical, so quietly revelatory, reads with the ease of many a novel.

When Sophie Kerr wrote PAINTED MEADOWS, great was my satisfaction that she had turned at last to her native region for the background of what was certainly, up to that time, her finest piece of fiction. In ONE THING IS CERTAIN she has again placed the action of her people in contrast to the beauty and settled delight of Maryland's Eastern Shore, with its farms, its religious revival meetings, its rural tournaments and its extraordinary variety of eccentric and lovable human characters. In the case of ONE THING IS CERTAIN, the "values" of this Maryland setting are greater than they were in PAINTED MEADOWS, because the new novel offers a far more dramatic story. It is the kind of a

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story, too, of which little can be disclosed without doing injustice to the prospective reader; I will only tell you that a disclosure near the end charges with a special significance everything that has gone before.

I watch tennis, but I play golf. The books on tennis, Tilden's and others on the Doran list, have always interested me; but my interest took on a new intensity when I picked up a copy of Harry Vardon's THE GIST OF GOLF. Do you wonder? Think of a chapter on the use of each club, by Vardon! And the photographic illustrations give everything that printed words can't convey. The book is not a textbook merely, being enlivened by Vardon's personal reminiscences of his years of play.

In this place last month I told about Frederic Arnold Kummer's book for children, THE FIRST DAYS OF MAN, and here is a picture of Mr. Kummer and one of his youngsters looking over the book while it was still in manuscript. The picture was taken, I believe, at Catonsville, Maryland, where the Kummers live. Mr. Kummer's magazine articles on the education of boys and girls have brought great numbers of letters from people who wanted THE FIRST DAYS OF MAN and the volumes that are soon to follow it in the series of three books called collectively THE EARTH'S STORY.

Those of you who read Simon Pure's London letter in this number of THE BOOKMAN will probably require no urging to read Compton Mackenzie's new novel, THE ALTAR STEPS. I think those who do pick up THE ALTAR STEPS will read to the last page, for the knowledge of late Victorian England and the whole atmosphere have very strongly the quality of such a study as Lytton Strachey's "Cardinal Manning" (in his "Eminent Victorians"). The picture of Mark Lidderdale, immature, beset by doubts and involved in the conflict of ecclesiastical opinions, and yet a man who must feel the breath of passion, is such portraiture as the beginner-novelist cannot manage. Mackenzie's many novels have evidently prepared the way for what is to be the most ambitious work of his career — for I understand that THE ALTAR STEPS is the first of three books, the second of which will probably be called THE PARSON'S PROGRESS.

Poetry is common nowadays. There is certainly no lack of it, nor any lack of new books of poetry. Just as certainly, in my judgment, there is a lack of poetry of the stamp of that in John Dos Passos's book, A PUSHCART AT THE CURB. The volume will particularly delight the many who revelled in Dos Passos's ROSINANTE TO THE ROAD AGAIN, since a large part of the verse obviously resulted from the Spanish journeyings that were productive of ROSINANTE. How versatile Dos Passos is! — and I expect his new novel, when it comes along, will be just as astonishingly different from THREE SOLDIERS as his successive books have been one from another.

Donald Ross

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"We never notice advertisements until the things they advertise are familiar to us."

How else are these things to become familiar to us? How has the tooth brush that is used by Mr. Swinnerton, the clothes, garters, soap, razor, fountain pen, collar, belt, hair tonic, cigarettes, typewriter, or household fixtures, or his automobile become familiar to him except through advertising? Or can it be that he is a non-user of these articles? Can he, or others, escape the bold, subtle, and intriguing advertisements of a thousand and one things confronting him at every turn, in newspapers, billboards, magazines, or the street cars? Despise them as he might, these advertisements have their silent effect, and trade names become to him synonyms of the goods he buys. Not to read them merely because he is disinterested in them demands a power over the fleeting glances of the eye that no man, not blind, is capable of attaining.

The most disheartening part of the whole article of Mr. Swinnerton's is his assertion that these hundreds of thousands of dollars spent by the publishers in advertising books ("voluptuously") are merely a sacrifice to the author's vanity — a compliment to authorship! "In the first place the publisher advertises because it pleases the author." Is the publishing business of such a philanthropic nature that it uses advertising despite, or because of, this melodramatic conception? Or is the writer such a vacant eyed child that he would prefer advertisements to revenue? The writing of books, the publishing of them, is a highly scientific business. Advertising has proved itself an indispensable factor of their publication. Mr. Swinnerton has conjured up rather a humorous indictment of the sanity of those publishers who recognize this truth.

Authors, including Mr. Swinnerton, are indebted to the limitless power of advertising. If well directed advertising will not sell their books, it should be an admonition for them to create better books. The public demands quality, and will continue to buy through advertising all things of quality. If its indifference is incurred, the fault lies with the makers. Dickens, Thackeray, O. Henry, Mark Twain, de Maupassant, etc., and hundreds of books of contemporary novelists, all are selling, and are being strongly advertised today. Let authors write ma-

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terial of more permanence and value and they will never have reason to attribute the failure of their books to the inefficacy of advertising.

THIS letter from Percival L. Prattis, city editor of the Chicago "Defender", furnishes an interesting glimpse of the Negro's viewpoint concerning books written about him by the white man:

"J. Poindexter, Colored", Mr. Irvin S. Cobb's latest work, is rather an unmanageable bone in the stew pot of literature of the Negro. The suggestion is somewhat homely, but so will the story be to a certain type of reader. On the other hand, one cannot fail to appreciate the author's having served well those whom he wished. Mr. Cobb's book is of, but not for, Negroes. If they had their say, to judge by the volume in question, the Kentuckian would rank very low indeed in the world of letters. Thus the story is good or bad, with the white race sure of one point and the black race sure of the other.

Whether or not whites and blacks are fundamentally different may be a moot question, but there is no denying that they don't laugh at the same things. Humor depends on whom it is on. The white man's risibility may be keenly sensitive to points in the Negro manner of doing, saying, or thinking that strike the black man as being too good to laugh at. For instance, his sore feet, if he has them, are not cheering to him as they inevitably are to the white man.

Mr. Cobb being from the south, is sure he knows the Negro. I, being a Negro, am just as sure that the famous humorist has made one grand mistake. What he has written of the Negro, humorously, is neither true, fair, nor funny to me.

The homely philosophy of J. Poindexter, Colored, is propaganda of a sort that may please Mr. Cobb's white admirers but will displease nine out of every ten Negroes. The author's hero is a southern judge's handy man and the locale of the story is New York, purposeful excursions being made into Harlem. Through J. Poindexter we learn from Mr. Cobb that Negroes leave the south for the north and a few stay, though they want to go back; that the first Negro you're liable to meet on invading Harlem is a confidence man; that there are two classes of Pullman porters—one being the "new-issue" sort and uppish in the face of white folk and the other being good and humble; that Negro business men employ Dunbar dialect and Florian Slappey reasoning; that Negroes may have ideas as the result of a queer sort of labor, but thinking is near-suicidal to them; that the name of a Negro organization is likely to be more humorous than appropriate; that the southern white man really knows how to treat the Negro (and Jeff laments that most of his race fail to realize that); that "Back-to-Africa" movements do not fetch the Negro's fancy; and that we as a race see much of white people, saying little.

Mr. Cobb has probably not intended to point out anything in earnest, but he does. Careful white readers will find in the book much that is amusing and a stereotyped attitude toward the Negro. Negroes should not fail to read it and make comparison with the stories of Hugh Wiley and Octavus Roy Cohen. None means anything so far as Negro literature is concerned, for they record erroneous impressions. Mr. Cobb's novel strongly suggests that the Negro has got to put himself in literature if America is to have the benefit of knowing how he lives, moves, and has his being. "J. Poindexter, Colored" is well written, is humorous to its world and innocent appearing, but decidedly hard to manage.

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The Pilgrim Press at Leyden has always been a subject of speculation and controversy among bibliographers, and these feelings will be intensified by the appearance of a bibliography of the Pilgrim Press, which has just been published in England, the work of Dr. J. Rendel Harris of the John Rylands Library and Dr. D. Plooij of Leyden. This work brings the list of Pilgrim Press imprints of William Brewster, Thomas Brewer, Edward Winslow, and John Reynolds, up to twenty, including one hitherto not known to bibliographers, an English edition of Dod and Cleaver's "Exposition of the Ten Commandments". It rejects Robinson's "Just Apology" and Johnson's "Plea" which have hitherto been considered Brewster imprints. One difficulty which has been encountered by workers in this field has been that the Pilgrim Press at Leyden was issuing works prohibited in England, presumably for English circulation, and had to do its work surreptitiously. Accordingly few of the Brewster books bear his name as printer, and some of them are not attributed to the printing house at Leyden. Meanwhile an American bibliographer, George Ernest Bowman, is at work on a bibliography of the Brewster Press, and when this is published some interesting controversy may be expected.

An important Keats manuscript has found its way to this country and is in the possession of Charles Sessler of Philadelphia. This is the poetical letter written to Charles Cowden Clarke, "Margate, Sept. 1816", which contains Keats's characterization of the forms of poetry, the sonnet, epigram, ode, and epic, with tributes to Milton, Spenser, Tasso, Mozart, and Handel. The manuscript is closely written on four quarto pages, completely in the autograph of the poet. It is one of the best known poetical letters in literature and was published with his poems in 1817.

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