RECENT BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

IF there is anything you want to know about Florida you will find the information painlessly administered in "Sun Hunting" by Kenneth L. Roberts (Bobbs-Merrill). It is a collection of gay little sketches as full of truth as they are of slang. They describe the time killing methods of society folk, those who "part their names on the side", and the hotels where, with reasonable economy, one can manage on fifty dollars a day. Nor is the humble "tin canner" omitted, the man from Michigan or Minnesota or New Jersey who packs his lares and penates into a Ford and starts south, sun hunting. The book has items of especial interest also for those who are planning not to go to Florida this year, for there can be nothing pleasanter than sitting before a weak radiator on a blustery day and reading about the mosquitoes in Miami.

Every once in a while we come across a biography that "hits the spot". It eschews dates, early youth, education, marriage, death of mother, first years in London, etc.—being rather a chunk of history, a bit of analysis, a dash of philosophy, all seasoned with a permeating, pungent sauce of slightly-out-of-focus photography. The result is a literary hash as agreeable as mysterious, as nutritious as varied. "George Gissing" by May Yates (Longmans, Green), though subtitled with the odious appellation, "An Appreciation", is impartial, just incoherent enough to be interesting, and omits enough about Gissing to arouse desire for investigation. That, after all, is the supreme test of a biography: whether it stirs interest to such a pitch that nothing will suffice but a more detailed knowledge of the person under consideration.

In writing "Nerves and Personal Power" (Revell) D. Macdougall King never forgets that the average mental age is between twelve and fourteen years. In fact, he frequently assumes that those statistics are too generous and addresses himself to an audience of morons. He proceeds from a careful and doubtless accurate study of the nervous system to an elaborate treatise on the moral necessity for control of the instincts — a Pollyanna version of very diluted Freudianism.

Tea parties and khedives, Irish questions and wizards, Alpine climbing and Boches; pay your money and take your choice. For though moderate exaggeration to state that in "The Adventure of Living" (Putnam) John St. Loe Strachey touches upon every subject in the Encyclopædia Britannica, its all embracing character is astonishing. Officially designated an autobiography, it is more often entertaining, illuminating gossip about poets, pundits, and politicians, ages entombed, or still stalking through London — the purposefully rambling discourse of one now bard, now imperialist-republican journalist. The Anglophobe will brand portions of the volume propaganda.

D. H. Lawrence in his fiction — that made successful by persecution and that which escaped this advertisement — has given his readers constant re-

minders of what he believes should be won from life. He has conveyed his message by the joy of those characters who revolt against conventions and by the sufferings of those who are docile. "But", one can almost hear him say, "while these are my beliefs, they cannot stand without support. The Philistines need more reason than the attainment of joy. Away with æsthetics; on with science." So now we have "The Fantasia of the Unconscious" (Seltzer), wherein the specific conduct for the realization of life's greatest possibilities is bedded in a pseudo-scientific upholstery that will probably fool no one. It may be unfair to charge Lawrence with concocting these reasons, but it is incomprehensible that his philosophy did not mature until these "unconscious fantasia" became "scientific" phenomena. The cart was built through years of experience; the horse was purchased over night in the hope that it might drag the cart before the eyes of more people. In these automotive days, the propelling force could have been hidden without exciting wonder, and Lawrence would not have been forced to parade his ludicrous animal before a most attractive wagon. His science, we fear, is more mixed than the above metaphors.

George Wharton Edwards has done much for the lover of London — for him who loves the city as a result of experience less than for him who loves it through literature and dreams. He has sifted the sights of the old English town, sifted them carefully and well. The sights that stayed in his sieve he has thrown aside with a casual phrase or two, but those bits of the rambling capital which leaked through he has saved for the readers of his "London" (Penn). So many persons have filled so many volumes with descriptions of this old place that it is incredible a new explorer could bring such an alluring freshness to such a big guidebook. But Mr. Edwards has taken the tiny corners and adorned them with pressing invitation. Throughout the de luxe volume, exceptionally well bound even for a special edition, appear water color and crayon sketches of here, there, and everywhere in the town. They, too, are Mr. Edwards's work, almost on the plane of merit won by the prose. Take away from London everything Baedeker has found, and there will be still the crannies that delighted this observer.

"From Seven to Seventy" by Edward Simmons (Harper) is the autobiography of one of those favored of the gods who live and die young in spirit. When ideas came to him, they were consummated in paintings and dismissed from his mind: thus one finds almost no reflections, either on life or painting, in his book. Nor does one learn much of his personal and emotional life. This is disappointing, and rather strange; one marvels at the reticence of a man who, in summing up his life, is content to reveal only its circumstances and not its mainspring — himself. But the vivid detailing of these unusually varied circumstances almost compensates for the omission; from the Old Manse made famous by Hawthorne to the Players, from California in the seventies to the art student's Paris, Mr. Simmons seems always to have become part of an environment at the time of its greatest interest. From seven to seventy his joy in life is unfailing; he is never bored — nor, in his book, boring.

"Streets and Shadows" (Moffat, Yard) is the expression of a simple,

direct, and forceful personality reacting to city life. Without hurry or loss of time, without straining after effect, with an almost terrible economy of words Mercedes de Acosta gives thumbnail impressions as pointed as a church steeple in rhythms as broken as the sky line of New York. Evidently a disciple of Whitman, she has managed to evade the prolixity that so often ruined that master's efforts at self-realization. When she tries rhyme she is not herself and manages to be ridiculous. In the midst of a description of some city scene, barren and solidly square, comes a poetic figure like the sweep of mist across the hard foreheads of skyscrapers. A few of the titles of the pieces will give some idea of the poet's leaning — "Song of Fifth Avenue", "Litany of Hands", "For Rent", "Newspapers", "A Bird Is Like Freedom". There are two poems called "New York" and one named "Manhattan".

There is inspiration, sanity, and much wisdom in Angelo Patri's "Child Training" (Appleton). The book is made up of a number of concise, chatty essays full of significant incident. They deal with children at home and in the school and are invaluable in the help they can render parents and teachers in understanding the spirit and soul as well as the mental and bodily needs of the child. Particularly lovely is the little essay on Lincoln. It is without reservations that we enthusiastically recommend this book.

An interesting phase of earlier American history is narrated with plenty of color and detail in Henry E. Chambers's "Mississippi Valley Beginnings" (Putnam). It recounts "the early history of the earlier West in outline", beginning with the Valley as a wilderness and the primitive ways of travel, Indian trails and *pirogues*, from La Salle and d'Iberville to the bursting of the "Mississippi Bubble", and the start of the English westward advance. Then we have the Valley during the Spanish domination, during the American Revolution, and from the Louisiana Purchase to post-Civil War days when the history of "Valley" west ends with the beginning of the "Prairie" west. The writing is vivid: there is an index, maps and illustrations, one a picture of a steamboat race on the Mississippi. It seems a pity that the average American reader who might be expected to enjoy a colorful and historically accurate narrative of this kind, is only too apt to prefer watered fiction with a similar "background" interest in the adventure magazines.

Hard riding; the night, and a galloping horse on the plain —

Henry Herbert Knibbs's "Saddle Songs" (Houghton Mifflin) are full of the rhythmic beat of hoofs; his lines gallop along, now in taut, nervous, tight reined metre, now lazily shambling with a slow laughter under their nonchalance. One feels in the man a complete and whole souled identity with the things about which he writes — the cowboys, the mesa trails, the canyons, the coyotes. Out of this crystal experience he has chipped many jeweled lines, sharp with western starlight, the creak of saddle leather, the warm steam of horses. It is a pity that so much of his verse bears the standardized "western" stamp, for this poet has a sensitive inner quick to which he should be devoutly and unequivocally faithful.

An apparently impartial and illumi-

nating discussion of present day conditions in the land of the Communist is to be found in "Industrial Revival in Soviet Russia" by A. A. Heller (Seltzer). The author calls attention to the fact that the Russian Revolution was one of the most gigantic upheavals in history, that it is not yet over and may not be over for years to come, but that it has turned from the destructive to the constructive stage, so that we may expect the gradual regeneration of Russia under Soviet rule. The mistakes of the Soviet government, contends Mr. Heller, must be judged in the light of the vastness of the transformation it has undertaken; we must not be too zealous in "discovering" evils that its own papers have called attention to repeatedly; and we must be prepared to acknowledge that, whatever blunders may have been made, conditions in Russia, outside of the famine areas, are better now than they were under the Tsars.

Emerson's dictum that "there is, properly, no history, only biography", is well exemplified in James Ford Rhodes's volume, "The McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations" (Macmillan). Those twelve years of swiftly moving incidents are spread before us in the deeds, the characters of the big men of the time. Mark Hanna, William J. Bryan, John Hay, Elihu Root, William H. Taft, the financiers Morgan, Rockefeller, Carnegie stand revealed. Furthermore, it appears that McKinley outshone the others, because he was a typical American; Roosevelt because he was not. McKinley was an ultra-refined composite; Roosevelt was individual, separate, distinct. Through these men, the Spanish-American War, the coal strike of 1902, the building of the Panama Canal, the Russo-Japanese peace conference, the prosecution of the trusts, the panic of 1907 are made to live again. A reading of this book provides a delightful way of reviewing events so recent as with difficulty to appear already historical.

After a chapter or so of "Our Southern Highlanders" (Harper), one also tilts back one's chair and begins spinning yarns with Horace Kephart's Appalachian mountaineers. The humor in the dialogues is contagious, and the carefree temperament of the people well brought out by the easy conversational style. This book, an enlargement of a previous edition, combines adventure with a study of mountain life which is both readable and of much value.

It is a pity that the jacket leads one to expect so much from the work of Cale Young Rice. "Mihrima" (Century) is didactic and in the ancient manner, yet one would forgive much to the evident sincerity of these pieces had not its author been extravagantly hailed by an English critic (?) as "the most distinguished master of Lyric utterance in the New World". The most immediate discovery that the reader makes is that he belongs emphatically to the old world not only in space but in time. Nowadays one may not read a monologue entitled "A Chicago Red" in the section "Lurid Lives" without thinking how Sandburg would have done it. Cale Young Rice says the thing that the Red might say and it is a sneer. The "distinguished master" should say the thing the Red feels and cannot say. Otherwise where is the difference between art and journalism? On this hangs all the argument between old and new schools of poetic expression. On this Mr. Rice fails. In the free rhyming poems in the section "Evocations" and in some of the "Etchings", the line is

hard, the poet escapes his lushness and assumes a character of his own instead of being the echoer of the past, or assuming the stiff poses into which his pretensions to interpret lives to whose secret he has no clue throw him. The title poem, a play in one act, after leading carefully up to a dramatic situation suddenly abandons it with a pointless miracle.

Doubtless no foreigner who comes to our shores is in his heart more difficult to Americanize than our brother the Englishman. He may adopt our ways and become almost indistinguishable from us, but deep down and ineradicable is his love for the tight little island and his belief in her superiority. For the Englishman at home and abroad Ernest Rhys has edited this collection, "The Old Country" (Dutton), "a book of the love and praise of England", made up of verse and song and prose quotations that picture her mellow beauty, her hallowed traditions, and her quiet places.

Dignity of bearing, grace of diction, and charm of voice would seem to be the essential virtues of a great character, according to Morris Schaff's "Jefferson Davis, His Life and Personality" (Luce). Of course, the supreme virtues of being well born and "a gentleman and a soldier" are assumed in anyone who aspires to that high estate. The author has made a desperate attempt to write this biography in the grand old style but he has achieved nothing more than a maudlin sentimentality punctuated by outbursts of ecstatic adoration.

"Human Character" by Hugh Elliot (Longmans, Green) is a collection of psychological "observations" which not only makes interesting reading but is likely to be of considerable practical value to the writer of fiction, inasmuch as it analyzes, so far as is now possible, the rules which govern conduct and the probable results on given types of character of particular trains of circumstance or emotion. For the ordinary reader a study of the book is almost as fascinating as the old game of giving oneself an intelligence test, though its net result, somewhat painful, is to let us "see oursel's as others see us".

Not everyone will appreciate a book which develops the "bright simplicity and domesticity . . . the unvarying humor (?) of an English parsonage" as dwelt upon in the pages of Percy Lubbock's "Earlham" (Scribner). Yet those who have a feeling for the detail of a happy and leisurely life, in which living takes on something of the quality of an unaccustomed art, will no doubt enjoy these impersonal memories, so happily mingling the narative of actual events and the fancies and reflections to which they give rise. "Earlham" is emphatically not a book for one who runs while reading, for all that its charm is genuine and sincere. Only the statement that "Everybody at Earlham talked well . . ." wakens a faint doubt. Such conversational perfection seems an impossibility, even in an English clerical home.

"The Life of Antonio Fogazzaro" by Tommaso Gallarati-Scotti (Doran) is, indeed, what its American publishers term it: "a spiritual biography"! Its author, described by Fogazzaro as "the person best qualified to write of me after my death", has patently "endeavored to write the story of a man's soul . . . the tragedy of one in search of God . . . a history and not a eulogy" — and has succeeded. Serious,

honest, both favorable and strongly unfavorable, this study makes live again Antonio Fogazzaro, brought to breath by the gentle hand of his favorite friend. As a book of critical theories, too, the book has large values. It is beautifully translated by Mary Prichard Agnetti, the translator of some of the novels of this, possibly the greatest Italian fictionist between Manzoni and D'Annunzio, and one called "the last of the greatest Catholics of his century".

Macmillan has brought out a new one volume edition of Sir James George Frazer's "The Golden Bough". Sir James has succeeded in compressing the original twelve volume work into a little over seven hundred pages. In this abridgment he has neither added new matter nor altered the views expressed in the last edition. In fact, he claims that new evidence has turned up since that time to prove to him he was originally right in his interpretation of magic and religion. The book takes in everything from the customs of aboriginal natives to the derivation of words. It is one of the most complete studies of human nature and development in existence. The new volume is especially inviting because of its singleness, good printing, and attractive makeup. Sir James has a style that leads the reader on and on through mazes of beautiful writing and absorbing matter. Here is a book that has more culture and learning packed into it than anything outside the Encyclopædia Britannica.

"Great Pirate Stories", collected by Joseph Lewis French (Brentano), is a rather dull anthology of buccaneer yarns. The tales included are extracts from larger books like Esquemeling's "The Buccaneers of America" and "Tom Cringle's Log". Apparently Mr. French had no particular plan in regard to the nature of the stories. They are a mixture of truth and fiction, mainly truth. While the truth is exciting enough in action, it makes dull reading in context. In picking up the book we rather expected to find a collection of good pirate fiction. Instead we find passages from the Indian Antiquary and Defoe. The entire book has more of an air of research and textbookishness than any collection of pirate stories should have. Probably the most exciting thing about it is the cover, drawn by Waugh. Here the pirates actually get a chance to do the deeds for which they are buried in words between the covers.

Ernest Peixotto has succeeded in spreading bits of color throughout his latest travel book — "Through Spain and Portugal" (Scribner) — but his insistence on emphasizing buildings as the outstanding features of the visited countries forbids his popularity among persons who prefer atmosphere to architecture. Enough travelers have written of the intangible treasures of these lands to assure one who has never been there that surprisingly different atmosphere does pervade the countries. Too seldom do the materialistic eyes of Peixotto find it. He sees the stones as bits of edifices, not as the possessors of sermons.

The self-abnegation of those souls who devote themselves to the beneficent work of making life bearable for the world's afflicted, wakes a chord of wistful admiration in the hearts of even the crassest materialists. Winifred Holt, whose book "The Light Which Cannot Fail" (Dutton) was published on the day of her marriage, has given the best of her life to re-

claiming the blind and making them useful members of society and the stories of her endeavors form an intensely appealing record.

Louise Driscoll has found the title for her new book of verse in an Egyptian legend that tells how after death the soul is escorted across the desert by the jackal to a mysterious heaven called "The Garden of the West" (Macmillan). This title poem, a dialogue between a Jackal and a Butterfly, done in stiff and uneven rhyme, is the least effective poem in a book that is, on the whole, successfully evocative of very tender atmospheres in its handling of various aspects of death. "Nausicaa" is full of fresh wistfulness and wondering regret. There is pathos in "Exit — the Fool". "Roses" is a free rhyming piece that is far better than its name would lead one to suspect. In the poem "Rain" occur the lines,

My heart will still be longing for a thin brown valley,
And low hills furrowed where timid sheep go
Over fields of asphodels and strange flowers blowing.
I will be remembering the fields I used to know. . . .

that startle the ear and the heart to reminiscence, but are so highly successful that one looks for more of them.

Mary Caroline Crawford has depicted the days of the latter part of the nineteenth century in Boston, with conscientious detail. Her book will be of interest primarily to the Boston "oldtimer" and the local historian, although the amusing anecdotes and descriptions have a universal appeal. The abolitionists, the Boston Fire, the old theatrical lights, the episode of Brook Farm, and the visit of Dickens are discussed in a most interesting way. The book is permeated by a civic pride which, perhaps due to Sinclair Lewis, we associate with the booster spirit of a more western atmosphere. Most non-Bostonians will be apt even to feel a pang of envy that their city cannot boast a Wendell Phillips, a Whittier, and an Emerson. "Romantic Days in Old Boston" (Little, Brown) is unquestionably a most fitting book to reedit at the hundredth anniversary of Boston's incorporation as a city.

The bewildering contradictions in "The Return of the Middle Class" (Scribner) by John Corbin make it difficult to ascertain how and when and why Mr. Corbin believes the middle class will return or even just what elements constitute this ephemeral entity. The book lacks coherence and is devoid of an objective, which may all be well in a realistic novel but is rather unsatisfactory in a sociologic work. The author's intense Nordic complex further complicates his meaning. If, as Mr. Corbin contends, the hordes of immigrants (Slav, Mediterranean, etc.) lower the standard of living for decent Americans (Nordics), why should it be the mission of the middle class to act the part of official strikebreaker — as Mr. Corbin suggests — when these hordes use the only weapon they possess to raise their standard of living? By another curious quirk Mr. Corbin's class distinctions are determined by cultural qualifications; hence, he dumps the illiterate but prosperous merchant in the lower or working class and the fifteen-a-week college bred clerk in the middle class. Emotionally, psychologically, anthropologically, perhaps, this is so, but pragmatically, it is not.

In "William Dean Howells, A Critical Study" (Dutton), Delmar Gross

Cooke has given a full view of this writer as author, critic, and eminent figure in American letters. There is enough biography interpolated to show Howells the man, to explain his principles and prejudices, the influences and friendships that were felt in his work; but the volume is devoted mainly to a sympathetic but searching criticism of his writing. Howells's importance to the world of letters has always been recognized but he has heretofore been more talked of than read; it is likely that people will now take to reading books about him instead of by him.

"Literary hors d'œuvres" is the unoriginal description given "Essays at Large" (Doran) by the publishers of this Solomon Eagle (J. C. Squire) collection. It is the variegated aperitif found in some restaurants which is so ample and inviting that the diner frequently makes of it a complete meal. This can be done with "Essays at Large". The variety of subjects is great, though almost all are related to things literary, even though so indirectly as "Reading in Bed"; the thoughts are thought provoking, and the style has the familiarity of a cordial British cousin — which Mr. Squire is. All these factors induce uninterrupted consumption. A companion volume to this is "Books Reviewed" (Doran) which is written without the Eagle nom de plume. The critic darts in and out of the terrifying mass of world literature with a commendatory pat on the back here, a disparaging slap there, and a worthwhile comment everywhere. He is a combination of the pedantic, serious critic and the casual, intimate reviewer.

"The great adventure of Mankind" is a compelling theme for one who has the skill to flourish his brush over a world wide canvas. It has an irresistible fascination for H. G. Wells, who has painted again with vivid strokes the story of civilization in "A Short History of the World" (Macmillan). Those who shied away from the rather ponderous "Outline" will find in this later account all the thrill of a serial novel. Mankind, the hero, treads the brink of one catastrophe after another; is often defeated, impoverished, or enslaved for a while; but in the next chapter rises victorious again, just a little nearer to his goal. There is a merciful dearth of dates and battles, a not so merciful ignoring of the story of European artistic progress, and many philosophic and religious discussions. In addition to its copious and beautiful illustrations, the story is enlivened here and there, as might be expected, by the author's personal prejudices, pushing out through his cold historical intent.

The student who is unable to attend college and has no craving for the special amenities offered by a college course, can secure its educational equivalent by a judicious selection from the ever increasing number of books written by college professors on their special subjects. "Elements of Human Psychology" (Houghton Mifflin) by Professor Howard C. Warren of Princeton University is an exceedingly lucid exposition of the fundamental principles of psychology. Intended primarily for college students, its simple brevity and comprehensiveness make it valuable for the free lance scholar.

All that the Imagists have declaimed against, all that has been denounced in the preface to "The New Poetry" can be found in "The Thinker" by Stanton

A. Coblentz (White). An introduction indicates that the author is conscious that his verses are of a type fallen into disrepute; he aims "to subject the truth to the vivid light of poetry". The first line in the book is

O stoic Thinker, mutely steeped in thought,

and much of the book is made up of long blank verse soliloquies of which "More Worlds to Conquer (Alexander the Great on his Death Bed)" and "Spinoza on his Excommunication" are typical. The poems contain much of those qualities of oratory which distinguish that art from poetry. But perhaps it's all a hoax.

A truly monumental piece of work is Paul Van Dyke's two volume history of "Catherine de Médicis" (Scribner). It combines a competent biography with an account of the politics of France for the period of her life. It was a troubled and complicated time when the foreign policies, the court intrigues, and the tragic struggles of the Huguenots make our present seem positively pastoral by contrast. Against this background Catherine stands, a dominant and impressive figure. Professor Van Dyke kindly tries to clear her of some of the evil deeds for which history blames her, but he does not hesitate to admit those for which there is any substantial proof whatever. They are many, but then a wicked queen is infinitely more interesting than a saintly one.

Real fables which leave their heroes shut out of heaven and hell differ from "Tomlinson" in being really merry. "The Soldier and Death", a Russian folk tale retold by Arthur Ransome (Huebsch), despite its sombre title and Slavic origin, is merry too. If the story has any deep symbolic meaning, the author has carefully avoided pointing it out, so the reader may enjoy his reading untroubled. But a fairy tale needs company, and this one is all by itself, in its own little book.

The lectures of Lafcadio Hearn on Rossetti, Swinburne, Browning, Morris, Meredith, Robert Buchanan, and Robert Bridges, have been selected and edited by Professor John Erskine from material originally preserved only in the lecture notes of Hearn's Japanese students at the University of Tokio. They are now issued under the title "Pre-Raphaelite and Other Poets" (Dodd, Mead). "Brilliant impressionism" has always been the convenient and apposite cliché to apply to Hearn's literary criticism. Here, in addition to that somewhat dubious characteristic, there is a penetration and an acumen and scholarship which have been less adequately recognized by those who have dismissed Hearn as one of the lost souls of nineteenth century romanticism. The simplicity of his diction is amazing. A wealth of illustration and of sound and graceful comment makes the volume delightful as an introduction either to Lafcadio Hearn or the Pre-Raphaelites — or both.

"In Memoriam" by Martin Feinstein (Seltzer) contains, besides the impressive and even noble title poem, which was awarded "The Nation's" Poetry Prize last year, two long poems the effectiveness of which is blurred by their allegorical nature; some rather flatfooted songs to Zion; and acute observations trenchantly worded in free verse. The author is at his best when, as in the poem "In Memoriam", his writing is based on the mental indignation and turmoil of emotions proceeding from personal, bitter experience.