RECENT BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

"I AM employed as Taster", says S. P. B. Mais in "Some Modern Authors" (Dodd, Mead). Mr. Mais's samples include just about everybody in the literary world now being discussed, boomed, or cried down. Among the novelists he notices are Sherwood Anderson, Gilbert Cannan, Galsworthy, Hergesheimer, Hutchinson, Ibáñez, Sinclair Lewis, McFee, Katherine Mansfield, Hugh Walpole, and Victoria Sackville-West. Among the critics he "tastes" Dean Inge and Lytton Strachey; Arthur Machen among autobiographers; Chesterton, Housman, and Hardy among poets; O'Neill and Clemence Dane among dramatists; and Alice Meynell and "incomparable" Max Beerbohm among the essayists. We must readily grant Mr. Mais's competence in two qualifications important to his position as a taster; he has variety and an unjaded palate. Does he — and here is the third, and most important condition — communicate the glow of his enthusiasm? Does he engender interest in the "thing itself" — in Mr. Galsworthy, in Bernard Shaw, in G. S. Street's essays? It is the reviewer's function to raise these questions; only the reader can answer them, and each reader only for himself.

Heaven save woman from her apologists if they be all like Anthony M. Ludovici, author of "Woman: A Vindication" (Knopf)! "A creature whose worst can be shown to be only the outcome of her best and most vital qualities . . . and whose best is but the normal and effortless expres-

sion of her natural endowments", is one of the book's characterizations. In other words, the writer defends woman against the charge of being anything else but a wonderfully coordinated mechanism for the perpetuation of the species. Say what you will against her, the author will calmly admit its truth and extenuate it on the grounds of being the expression of a natural function or the unnatural expression of that function when inhibited. The vindication offered is worse than the crime alleged. For those who love to argue, the book is full of material.

The "Satyricon" of Petronius has appeared in a new English version by J. M. Mitchell. It is one of the series of Broadway Translations published in London by Routledge and in New York by Dutton. In spite of the American sounding name of the series, this is a translation into good colloquial British. The slang and the various argots of the original Mr. Mitchell has turned into the corresponding expressions in London English today, with some curious effects in verbal anachronisms. The "Satyricon" is among other things a clever satire on the vulgar newly rich, a picture of Roman life under Nero, and a study of certain sexual perversions. Those passages which are obnoxious to the Puritan morality of our times are either modified or set down in the original Latin. Anyone who has learned his Latin grammar, it appears, has thereby put himself out of reach of moral corruption.

James Peter Warbasse, in his "Co-operative Democracy" (Macmillan), is no lone spokesman of an untried system, no Tennyson babbling of "the parliament of man, the federation of the world". President of the Co-operative League of the United States, and member of the central committee of the International Co-operative Alliance, he speaks to these United States of a slowly evolving, well established "Co-operation" that in thirty-seven countries has over thirty million heads of families working within it. No dark and dire world communism is hidden here. "Service, not profits", "the consumer, not the producer", as the keys to his system, Mr. Warbasse presents ably, challengingly, his "practical, working plan for a complete reorganization of society upon a voluntary, non-political basis".

Now soon will April's laughter chime once more
From youthful brooks; young leaves will thrill with rain;
The earth will bear its fruitage, as of yore;
And yet — can Spring be Spring to us again?

So reads the second of three interesting quatrains entitled "Springtime in War", included in a new series of short poems by Paul Scott Mowrer, "The Good Comrade and Fairies" (Dutton). Mr. Mowrer's nature poems which adhere to rhymed iambic pentameter are more pleasing than those written in blank verse. The versification of the "Fairy" series is more varied. "The Sea-Fairy", rich in imagery and action, is composed of sprightly couplets:

Leaning alert in a lavender shell,
From darkening hollow to whitening swell,
Through spray that hisses and slaps and stabs
She guides her team of galloping crabs.

Her arms are white as the break of a wave,
Her eyes are bright as the foam they brave,
And the cry she gives, as she takes a crest,
Is wild and sweet as a fairy jest.

E. M. Forster's "Pharos and Pharillon" (Knopf) is a series of sketches

of ancient and modern Alexandria. "Pharos, the vast and heroic lighthouse that dominated the first city — under Pharos I have grouped a few antique events; to modern events and to personal impressions I have given the name of Pharillon, the obscure successor of Pharos, which clung for a time to the rock of Silsileh and then slid unobserved into the Mediterranean." The antique events are the more interesting; but the book, though written with subtlety and wit, is, scanty literary fare.

"Gloucester by Land and Sea" (Little, Brown) was written by the late Charles Boardman Hawes to the accompaniment of drawings by Lester G. Hornby. It is not a source book for historical or genealogical research, but an interesting story for an interested reader, told simply, consecutively, and with literary charm.

The adept handling of T. R. Glover's Latin version of Robert Louis Stevenson's "A Child's Garden of Verses" (Appleton) will have an especial appeal for teachers and advanced students of Latin. Instead of merely presenting a Latin translation, Mr. Glover, a keen and sympathetic student of Stevenson's works, has rewritten the themes in the language of Horace so adroitly that he succeeds in retaining the Stevensonian charm throughout. "De Ludis et Hortis" is a definite contribution to literature and, at the same time, a delicate tribute to our beloved R. L. S.

In Harold Nicolson's "Tennyson" (Houghton Mifflin) we find a sincere scholarly biography. The author has collected a tremendous amount of detail, sifted it honestly, and presented us with a really adequate portrait of his subject. Mr. Nicolson has not permitted his sense of values to be warped by the closeness of his study of his material. Although the book lacks (and, we must confess, we miss it keenly) the brilliant irreverence with which we can imagine it might have been vested by Lytton Strachey or Philip Guedella, it never for a moment becomes dull.

Occasional volumes on the war are still finding their way to the book stalls. Among them is "The Red Vineyard" (Torch Press), by the Reverend B. J. Murdoch, late chaplain to the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. It is a vivid narrative of experiences on active duty, written in the first person. Since the experiences are those of a Catholic priest and much stress is given to the festive days of his religion, the narrative will be of greatest interest to Catholics. However, Father Murdoch's depiction of the horrors of the front line trenches should hold the attention of readers of any creed.

After all the tawdry Sunday supplement publicity given to the excavated tomb of King Tutankhamen, it is a relief to come upon a solid scientific work on the reign of this king and the religions of his time. In "Tutankhamen: Amenism, Atenism, and Egyptian Monotheism" (Dodd, Mead), Sir E. A. Wallis Budge of the British Museum presents his subject simply and clearly, but without attempting to play down to the so called popular taste. Yet his discussions of the cults of Amen and Aten, their historic development and significance, not only are of the greatest interest to the Egyptologist; they are comprehensible to the general reader as well. And many authentic illustrations, and re-

productions of hieroglyphic originals, supplement the text.

It is not the London in which Thackeray himself lived and worked, but that in which his characters had their being, that E. Beresford Chancellor pictures in "The London of Thackeray" (Doran). In an historically descriptive manner the author presents the city of Henry Esmond and Harry Warrington, of Arthur Pendennis, Becky Sharp, and Charles Yellowplush. He achieves continuity by following the line of development of Thackeray's novels, and brings out his points by "purple patches" of quotation. Well chosen illustrations add to the interest of the book, which, however, is a reference work rather than a volume for casual reading. To attempt to read this cicerone *per se* would hardly be advisable; but in its proper sphere — as an adjunct to the reading of Thackeray — Mr. Chancellor's book will do a good deal to clarify localities in the reader's mind, and will give much of the joy of recognition to lovers of the great Victorian.

Rafael Sabatini's "The Life of Cesare Borgia. A History and Some Criticisms" (Brentano) has, to begin with, several advantages. First, it is founded less on outgrown politics than on comparatively authentic, unbiased contemporary accounts. The Cesare Borgia of Burchard's "Diary" and not the defamed caricature from out the salacious minds of Sanazzaro, Guicciardini, "Tommaso Tommasi", and other "historians", is Sabatini's Cesare. Secondly, Sabatini comes to his central figure through painstaking yet absorbing heredity and environment. And, thirdly, this Sabatini fellow seems to have been born with a pen in his hand! Not one novel in a hundred has the Machensian "ecstasy" this biography affords. With a little less emphasis on swashbuckling battle and a little more on "the arts of peace" the "butcherous Borgias" really did so much for as art patrons, this volume would come near to being the ideal treatment of its enthralling subject.

The essays, metaphysical and historical, in Hartley Burr Alexander's "Nature and Human Nature" (Open Court), constitute a medley of many philosophic themes which represent some fifteen years of reflection. "Nevertheless", says Professor Alexander, "the collection should not be without its own consistency, which, first of all, should be that consistency of the growth of a characteristic point of view which is (in their author's belief) the substance of every philosophy." Though originally published in philosophic journals, the essays are for the most part not technical and seem well adapted, if not actually intended, for the intelligent layman.

When a printer and editor makes "A Dash Through Europe" (Oswald), he is apt to ride his hobby hard, whatever the side attractions of the trip may be. Edmund Gress has made his enthusiasm for fine printing the major interest in his book, and has illustrated it well with photographs of old Roman inscriptions, and reproductions from English texts, ancient and modern. There is an excellent account of the International Book Fair in Florence, where America's exhibit was but a meagre representation compared with the displays from Italy and Germany. The secondary details of the trip are much like those of other "first" travel books, except that the author's very practical mind is revealed at every turn. His last chap-

ter, giving the minutest details of expense, itinerary, food and the best places to find it, will probably be of value to any traveler who has not much time to spend and wishes to make the most extensive use of it.

Free verse still fits the inspiration of some of the newer poets. In his "Cups of Illusion" (Houghton Mifflin) Henry Bellamann has handled formal metre well in a minority of the poems, and dispensed with it in the rest, in favor of short, irregularly syllabled lines. All of which goes to show that a genuine poet can use free verse without being led astray by it. Yet it does, almost always, leave a sense of unfinished things even when, as here, the unfinished things are often beautiful. There is a very delicate fancy running through these poems; color and finely touched harmonics of interpretation are here. These are poems for poets, slight at times, but never unpoetic.

There are two general classes of biographies: the impartial, matter of fact type; and the type which deals principally in honeyed encomiums — the former epitaphical, the latter eulogistic. We claim to have discovered a biographical Burbank. In "Victor Hugo, His Work and Love" (Doran), Lieutenant Colonel Andrew C. P. Haggard has crossed the two genera, producing a hybrid form that is quite delightful. If he has retained some of the stickiness of the sentimentalist he has also retained a great measure of the lucidity of the historian. The book is absorbing reading, not only because of the lure of Hugo himself, but because Colonel Haggard adheres to plain, unostentatious diction that is almost conversational. His is a carefree, easy style that lends itself admirably to the subject. Not too scholarly for the uninformed, and sufficiently accurate to be of service to the student.

It was with a slight grimace that we took up "French Literature During the Last Half-Century" (Macmillan), for we found that John W. Cunliffe and Pierre de Bacourt were coauthors. Once upon a time we studied one of Professor Cunliffe's textbooks, and flunked the course (naturally the fault lay with Professor Cunliffe!). But there is a vast difference between reading a book because one's teacher says one must, and reading it of one's own volition. Under durance vile, the texts of Professors de Bacourt and Cunliffe aroused violent antipathy; now, we experience profound admiration for the present volume which is succinct, yet not cut and dried. A series of familiar essays about several French writers well known during the last fifty years comprises the body of the work. These short treatises are informative, readable, and as impartial as such treatises ever can be. Here should be an admirable reference book both for the student of comparative literature and for him who wishes to understand the modern French viewpoint in the writing of fiction.

In striking contrast to his countryman, d'Annunzio, who so frequently makes passion the subject of his song, Giovanni Pascoli almost entirely disregards the love element, with the exception of love for his fellowman and for nature. A book of selected "Poems" by the eminent Italian writer has been gracefully translated into English verse by Evaleen Stein (Yale), with much of its original lightness and beauty preserved, in spite of the

well known difficulty of interpreting the easily rhymed Italian in our own much less facile language. Pascoli's work breathes sincerity and quiet tenderness, handling well worn themes with delicate fancy and a never failing ability to see in them an inward loveliness. In this he is a refreshing contrast to many of the realists of today, whose eyes are so focused that only ugliness makes a clear image on their poetic retinas.

A kind of Baedeker de luxe, a handbook for the well to do tourist, Rolland Jenkins's "The Mediterranean Cruise" (Putnam) gives the main items of historic, legendary, and practical information that those who make the Mediterranean sea voyage might feel able to assimilate. Up-to-dateness (the Russian refugees in Constantinople and Tutankhamen in Egypt are remembered), large type, forty illustrations, a reading list of travel books dealing with the countries covered, and a simple manner of presentation, within reach of the normal tourist capacity, characterize the pleasantly written work. The average traveler will welcome it: it is not meant for those who rely upon a broader cultural knowledge rather than a pleasant surface currycombing to point the glow of their exotic reactions.

Charles Wharton Stork, editor of "Contemporary Verse", has selected about 120 poems from the files of his magazine and gathered them into a "Second Contemporary Verse Anthology" (Dutton). Most of these were originally published between 1920 and 1923, though a few earlier poems are included, presumably because the authors have since become famous. As might be expected in such a collection, only two or three of the poems are really inspired. All of them are sincere, however. The editor says that his anthology attempts to represent America, that he wishes it to be read as "the spiritual record of an entire people". Alas, the baseball box scores afford a better "spiritual record" than any collection of poetry whatsoever!

The common theory regarding the successful politician is that he must be a man born of the people. As a matter of fact he should be all of this and at least one jump ahead of them; otherwise he will never leave the herd. This is a rather roundabout way of getting to "The New Henry Ford" (Funk and Wagnalls), a biography by Allan L. Benson, but it has a great deal to do with Mr. Ford, inasmuch as common gossip has him competing in the next presidential race. Mr. Ford responds nobly to the first requisite but he appears sadly minus the second. For some unsanitary reason Americans prefer that their presidents be born in small houses; Mr. Ford's parents have obligingly supplied this little detail. What they did not do, however, was to equip Mr. Ford with the power to capitalize his birthright to the extent that he could successfully turn public interest into sentiment once it had come his way. And, from Mr. Ford's biography — as is more or less interestingly compiled by Mr. Benson — it is quite apparent that Mr. Ford, or his type, will be always minus that ability.

In "My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories" (Little, Brown) Sir George Buchanan, English Ambassador to Russia, 1910-1918, gives us what is undoubtedly the most straightforward, revelatory, altogether readable account we have had of the conditions which contributed most to

the downfall of Russia's old order. The briefest possible coherent record of some thirty-five years in diplomatic service in Vienna, Berlin, Sofia, Petrograd, Rome, etc.; a considerable synopsis of Balkan history leading up to the world cataclysm; the minimum of the World War from a military standpoint, are among the wise proportionings of these two average sized volumes. Of their 150,000 or so words, hardly one is wasted.

Rare indeed is the book of verse which can stand the test of being read at one sitting. The little wisps of beauty, each one of which would give us a moment of happiness if met alone, fade into monotony when one hundred and fifty are ranged side by side. In her latest volume of collected poems, "At the Roots of Grasses" (Moffat, Yard), Muriel Strode catches, in many words and phrases, the loveliness which she so constantly pursues; but these happy flashes are smothered by the sameness of her theme and the everlasting glorification of the perpendicular pronoun. One gets throughout too much the impression of conscious soul searching. This is a pity from a poet who could write "God of Desecrated Beauty", or such adroit lines as:

> God of my yearning, how deep is the whorl,
> and how shallow is my dipping up!

"The Story of the Mikado" (Knopf) had to be told. We are to be humbly thankful that W. S. Gilbert himself did it. If he hadn't done it, the burden might have been assumed by a graduate student at the University of New Mexico. The whole story is here, without undue omission or elaboration. Sir William's prose runs as smoothly and as trippingly as his verses, and is fittingly enclosed in a handsome format. Certain concessions have been made to a potential juvenile audience in the retelling. Koko's famous song, for instance,

> Of inconvenient people who might well be
> underground,

now is made to deal with the scholastic perplexities of grammar school, "people who are stingy with their jam", dentistry, nurse maids, and the tortures of music lessons. All this is very delightful, yet one wonders at the author's temerity in emending a classic, and wishes that "The Story of the Mikado" might have represented the original with absolute fidelity of detail.

"The Open Door Doctrine in Relation to China" (Macmillan) "potentially at least, a political as well as a commercial principle", from its inception has rightly regarded "equality of privilege" as "a better bulwark to the tottering Chinese Government than a door open to one nation and closed to another." Loans, investments, cooperation with other nations are needed, as Dr. Mingchien Joshua Bau (author also of "The Foreign Relations of China") points out. "International cut-throat competition, the practice of spheres of influence, or international cooperation and combination" — we must choose one of the three. So, the only workable principle seems — the international banker — *and trust to luck!*

The author of "The Happy Traveller" (Holt), Frank Tatchell, distinguishes sharply between those for whom the book is intended and tourists, rightly considering the latter almost unworthy of mention. Ramblingly, discursively, he makes sug-

gestions and offers inducements for the rambling and discursive style of journey which he recommends. His joy is in meeting and observing people rather than in viewing sights; for those who have become wise enough to agree, he is casually rich as his beloved vagabondia. The book touches various countries from the South Seas to Portugal, with appendixed vocabularies, suggestions for food and drink, occasional names of hotels and cafés. There are also valuable hints for those who, like Mr. Tatchell, find it convenient to travel inexpensively.

Next to the British lecturer, the British informal essayist has done most to mar that natural amity which we like to think does, or conceivably might, exist between our country and England. Robert Lynd purchased atonement with his "Books and Authors", a terse, pithy, and graceful book, quite in the best tradition of the English causerie. "Solomon in All His Glory" (Putnam) is his most recent volume, and one more concerned with rabbits, owls, Londoners, dresses, the Sabbath, conversation, buses, and beggars, than the literary topics which he handled with so light a touch in the earlier book. All this is familiar, and dangerous, ground. But Mr. Lynd scans the countryside with the bright interest of a vacationist townsman, observes the town with the shrewd eyes of the countryman, and manages with exemplary skill to vitalize the trivia over which so much good ink has been spilled.

Samuel Adams, Franklin, Washington, Hamilton, Madison, Jefferson, John Marshall, Daniel Webster, Andrew Jackson, Lincoln, and "Fifty Years of Growth and Change" supply the skeleton framework for Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler's "Building the American Nation" (Scribner), lectures delivered during the spring of 1923 before seven various university audiences in diverse cities in England and Scotland. Not without skill when it comes to keeping repetition at a minimum and to making sundry hypothetical tributaries flow into a single progressive stream of human affairs — yet one yearns, as one reads on in these lectures, for simpler, more spontaneous, not less opinionated but more truly imaginative and fair minded utterances.

"How to Write Stories" (Harcourt, Brace) by Walter B. Pitkin is the most recent addition to the long shelf of manuals and technical handbooks for those whose vanity or cupidity is touched by the thought of authorship. Mr. Pitkin's book is as disappointing as one of Calvin Coolidge's epigrams. Throughout its length it insists upon a rigid schematism for the creative process. It makes one feel that he can, by exercise of intelligence and diligent study of "How to Write Stories", build a first rate plot, manipulate a sound narrative, select detail with a sure sense of fitness, and evoke the uniquely characteristic act which tops off a fine story. But what the book can teach is simply the critical canon by which the average editor determines whether a manuscript is at all possible or no. This may assist a writer of some aptitude to turn out a salable story. But the result will be easily recognizable as the familiar, standard product, *la pièce bien faite*. After reading some of Mr. Pitkin's own excellent short stories the reviewer is moved to remark that Mr. Pitkin is a better artist than æsthetician; which seems to prove the case for the intuitionalist against "How to Write Stories".