

The Man Who Fed the World

Everyone concedes that Herbert Clark Hoover deserves a good biography. Thanks to Vernon Kellogg, his associate on the Commission for Relief in Belgium, he now has one. *Herbert Hoover, the Man and His Work*, is a biography as adequate as it is readable and contains exactly what the reader wishes to know. In it you can find out who the Hoovers were, how young Herbert finally managed to vanquish the bug-bear of "English composition" at Stanford University, how he learned typewriting between a Friday and the next Tuesday, his adventures as an engineer in the waterless interior of Australia and during the Boxer uprising in China, how the Belgian Relief Commission came to be organized, how Hoover wrung concession after concession from an unfriendly German Government on behalf of the Belgian civilians, how he handled the Food Administration in the United States, and how his efforts after the war saved from famine and Bolshevism the great belt of famished nations from the Baltic to the Adriatic. It is a magnificent picture of the most truly American figure of our time.

Herbert Hoover, the Man and His Work, by Vernon Kellogg. Appleton.

Bedouins

James Huneker's writing is full of sound and fury but it signifies a good deal. His criticism is backed by a real knowledge of most of the arts in most of the centuries and he tosses off quotations and allusions so rapidly that an attempt to place every one in any given essay is like trying to qualify in one of Dr. Crane's What-Do-You-Know tests. *Bedouins*, to judge by Mr. Huneker's last volume, are almost anything, but especially Mary Garden. They include thoughts on the "Artistic Temperament" and "Painted Music" and "Caruso on Wheels" and Chopin and Debussy and other interesting people. It is high-speed, colorful, fascinating writing which leaves you with vivid if somewhat tumultuous impressions.

Bedouins, by James Huneker. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Digestible Mince Pie

Mince Pie is an excellent name for Christopher Morley's miscellaneous collection of essays, poems, skits and character sketches; none of the ingredients have any relation to each other, some of them are much better than others, but the conglomeration is delicious. Mr. Morley mixes his metaphors a little by urging you to read the book in bed, as a soporific, which

is surely not the mission of mince pie, but any way it is worth reading, at least most of it is. The good parts are so very good that one resents the inclusion of an occasional forced and commonplace bit. Mr. Morley has not only a sense of humor but an original sense of humor. He is really whimsical, a characteristic much rarer in human nature than publishers' announcement would lead you to believe.

Mince Pie, by Christopher Morley. George H. Doran Co.

Dingy Pictures from Life

From poetry, sometimes sentimental, Margaret Widdemer has turned to writing unescapably realistic fiction. Her latest book, *The Boardwalk*, is a collection of stories about the winter life of an Atlantic coast resort.

The feverish, tawdrily gay summer, when you couldn't do a thing with the children, alternated with the empty idle winter, when there wasn't a thing for the children to do. If our people had any money they sent us to boarding-school. If they hadn't, or didn't worry, we spent fourteen hours a day and all available change on the boardwalk in summer, and made precocious love to each other there in winter after school.

It is with that precocious love making that most of the stories begin. It is a sordid, tawdry, unwholesome atmosphere, the sort of atmosphere that one would shun if the ideas back of the stories and their psychology, for they are primarily stories of character, were not really interesting. In some of them the people are stronger than their background and manage to break away from it entirely, and those stories are as good, often better, than the others. Which raises the question of the place of the sordid in art. Is the skill with which it is done a sufficient excuse for painting dead fish and tinsel?

The Boardwalk, by Margaret Widdemer. Harcourt, Brace & Howe.

The Newer Composers

Most of the guide books to the realm of music fail us just when we need them most, that is when we want to know something about the younger set who are claiming our attention. Here Paul Rosenfeld comes to our aid in a volume of criticism which may be called a postscript to any encyclopedia for he devotes most of his attention to the composers with whom we have had the opportunity to become acquainted only in recent years. The chief interest of the book therefore lies not in the essays on Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz, appreciative as they are, but in what he tells us of Ornstein, who comes from the ghetto; of Rimsky-Korsakoff, who as a lieutenant in the Russian navy came to our rescue in the Civil War; of Sibelius, who voices Finland; of Debussy, whose music is as ethereal as Maeterlinck's prose; of Stravinsky, who has "minted music anew"; of Moussorgsky, who represents the old religious Russia; of Scriabine, who has enlarged the scope of the piano; of Schoenberg, "the great troubling presence of modern music."

Musical Portraits. Interpretations of twenty modern composers. By Paul Rosenfeld. Harcourt, Brace & Howe.