RECENT BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

AMONG the ten books that bore us most there ought to be included at least one guide book for touring Europe. Not even such an attractive pocket volume as "Planning a Trip Abroad", edited by Edward Hungerford (McBride), can lift the curse of long generations of Baedekers. In these parlous times Mr. Hungerford's book is probably as up to date and reliable as any similar guide could possibly be. Information not contained in most guidebooks and usually inaccurately gleaned from one's fellow travelers is included. The author has provided for the failings of Americans in the matter of tipping and proper dress for certain occasions. Such counsel, however, will probably not be so closely regarded as his illuminating chapter on automobile touring abroad, a method of travel which has brought to many an ambitious American unforeseen tribulation.

Youth, when it strums its lyre, has a habit of donning sackcloth and ashes. The muse attending the collegiate minnesinger is, as a rule, tragic. "Oxford Poetry, 1922" (Appleton) is the usual preciously bound collection of fairish but never distinguished verse. Its songs are indeed doleful, treating of suicides, floods, unrequited passion, and doddering age. Here and there the wary reader may encounter a felicitous phrase, but for the most part these are slender strophes in a slender volume.

After publishing Llewelyn Powys's creditably assembled group of "Thirteen Worthies", the American Library Service burdens the little book with advertising propaganda ranking its author with Lytton Strachey. As a matter of fact there is nothing of brilliance here. These cameo portraits of Chaucer, Montaigne, Marlowe, and others are workmanlike, digestible, and informative, but at no point do they begin to achieve the glitter that characterizes "Victoria". Mr. Powys selects his material wisely and garnishes it, ever and anon, with neat quotations from more distinguished pens.

Those who have already learned from the pocket philosophy of Arnold Bennett how to live on twenty-four hours a day may very well wish to know how to improve and embellish

the existence they have thus put in tune, if not with infinity, at least with the clock. They and many another will profit pleasantly by reading Mr. Bennett's latest offering of not too solemn and never ponderous advice, "How to Make the Best of Life" (Doran). To start with, "it is absolutely necessary to satisfy, without over-indulging, your temperament", a problem not nearly so simple as it sounds, and of prime importance in modern psychology, not to speak of the ancients. Mr. Bennett's hints and don'ts upon how to achieve this difficult end have brightly yet sagaciously to do with falling in love, marriage, children, and numerous other not uninvolved situations in the common lot. And it may be said, without giving away the whole plot, that Mr. Bennett believes in common sense. The fact that scholars have not always agreed upon the definition of this commodity stimulates the author as well as the reader of these essays to plenty of original reflections.

A book of the verse of Maxwell Bodenheim appearing in an edition limited to 575 copies offers copious opportunity for amusement. The volume itself is not large but into four pages of "Reluctant Foreword" the creator has given smile upon smile. Here is an American poet ranting madly against American poets. Forgetting his own fragile domicile, he hurls boulders about regardless of where they may fall. One listens for the crash as these missiles collide with the houses they are directed against, but the loudest noise comes when they bounce merrily back into the glass compartment labeled: "Maxwell Bodenheim, Chicago." Here is one of the projectiles: "The poetic situation in America is, indeed, a blustering and verbose invitation to boredom and a slight, reviling headache." After reading the verse in "The Sardonic Arm" (Covici-McGee) one sees that charge rebound accurately and damningly against Mr. Bodenheim's little glass house. There is in the preface to the book considerable angered sorrow expressed over various misfortunes which have befallen subtlety, style, delicate fantasy and irony. One searches hopefully and, later, hopelessly through the verses in this book for these four qualities. Alas, Mr. Bodenheim has fashioned words into compositions which topple before the criticism which precedes them. The flamboyant egotism of the poet refuses to recognize this and so the limited edition was published. No one who loves those who love themselves should miss the foreword, nor should those who enjoy the spectacle of self-deceit. This comment will not injure Mr. Bodenheim's feelings. They are too firmly entrenched in the shrine he has constructed — the shrine of his own importance.

Madge Jenison's "Sunwise Turn: A Comedy of Bookselling" (Dutton) may not be Balzac, in any stricter sense; yet it is an undeniably personal intimate record of human contacts made at first hand, in what would ordinarily be considered a purely commercial field — that of selling books. The fact that Miss Jenison knows human beings, has a real sense of humor, and possesses the gift of making people live and move before us, gives her little volume a vital charm. Its 162 pages show more insight, a better understanding and appreciation of human qualities, foibles, and idiosyncrasies than many a pretentious character novel twice as long.

Gertrude Stein has blossomed forth again. This time it is a garish collection of wordy flotsam and jetsam, an olive branch to the futurist, but a puzzle to the uninitiated. Whether Gertrude Stein or the publisher, the Four Seas Company, named the anomaly "Geography and Plays" is difficult to divine. However, the title has about as much relevancy to the whole as the words have to the sentence structure. Let us challenge Einstein, protagonist of the theory of relativity, to find the true relation of this quotation to layman logic:

Guess a green. The cloud is too hold, collected necessary pastes in that shine of old boil and much part, much part in thread and land with a pile. The closeness of a lesson to shirt and the reason for a pale cullass is what is the revolution and retaliation and serpentine illustration and little eagle. A long little beagle, a long little scissor of a kind that has choice, all this makes a collation.

Though futurists may deny, it would seem that Gertrude Stein has used her language to conceal her thoughts. We suggest a copy of a futurist book of indication with code to go with each copy, so that those who read may not run away. However, we will say this: the book is good reading when one seeks relief from present day high pressure literature.

Burton J. Hendrick, whose "Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" brought him a 1922 Pulitzer Prize, has now turned his attention to "The Jews in America" (Doubleday, Page). This brief study, which makes no pretense to exhaustiveness, is to be commended for simplicity of style and freedom from bias. Mr. Hendrick emphasizes the fact, all too little appreciated in this country, that the Spanish and German (or western) Jews differ from the Polish (or eastern) Jews in every essential save religion. He analyzes the reasons for the assimilability of the early Jewish settlers from Spain and Germany, and shows why it is that our immigrants of the last forty years from eastern Europe present a much graver Americanization problem. As to the reputed Jewish control of American industry and finance, Mr. Hendricks presents data indicating that "the racial stocks which founded the United States . . . still control its wealth". Furthermore, he gives instances to prove that whereas the Jew has great powers of imitation, he lacks the faculties — essential for economic domination — of creation, organization, and cooperation.

The subject of A. G. Gardiner's "The Life of Sir William Harcourt" (Doran) will doubtless prevent it from enjoying in America the widespread success it has achieved in England, for Harcourt is not well known in America. Yet he should be. Not the least interesting portion of Mr. Gardiner's two volumes describes Harcourt's attitude during our Civil War. He not only favored strict neutrality, though siding with the north, but was able to make his policy effective through his close connection with the government. Thus to his influence must be ascribed the peaceful settlement of several dangerous disputes, among them the "Alabama" claims. Moreover, an unusual courtesy and fairness on the part of Delane of the "Times", who expressed the prevailing sentiment in favor of the south, made Harcourt what amounted to spokesman of the government's policy to the nation and the world. In his letters signed "Historicus" he discussed the difficult problems which arose between England and the United States "with a luminous force and a wealth of learning that profoundly

influenced the course of events and made them a permanent contribution to the discussion of the relations of nations in time of war". Though writing obviously *con amore*, Mr. Gardiner never loses his poise or discrimination. He has chosen his material well and his narrative is interesting throughout.

For the fifth edition of Wilfred Gibson's "Daily Bread" (Macmillan) the title poem has been rewritten. The poems are in the form of dramatic scenes or tragedies from the life of the humble, introducing as characters the deserted mistress, the woman whose child is stillborn, whose husband has been lost in a mine accident or mangled by machinery, and so on. The language is incongruously elevated, the moral sentiments platitudinous, and the poems almost uniformly dull.

If you would gain a miscellaneous assortment of knowledge in a minimum of time, hie to "A Desk-Book of Idioms and Idiomatic Phrases in English Speech and Literature" (Funk, Wagnalls) by Frank H. Vizetelly, Litt.D., LL.D., and Leander J. de Bekker. You will be informed as to African golf, Eastern Question, hokum, Santa Claus, Pons Asinorum, lame duck, Hardshell Baptists, Fleet-Streetese, complex-phobia, and many other equally absorbing subjects. You will learn that "hooch" is a contraction of the Amerind *hoochinoo*, and you will no doubt be surprised to read that the fox trot was invented by a vaudeville dancer named Fox, "and the selection of the steps was arranged by him quite independently of anything zoological".

It is not always an unmixed pleasure to turn the pages of a volume devoted to a certain period and its problems by one who has made that period his special field. The authority is apt to take too much for granted on the part of the reader. This is not the case in Rachel Annand Taylor's "Aspects of the Italian Renaissance" (Houghton Mifflin). As Gilbert Murray in his preface implies, she has used imagination on a basis of exact knowledge in giving us a poetic and sympathetic picture of an age whose appeal endures. The beautiful opening chapter which outlines the "Mediæval Dream and the Renaissance Morning" is balanced by the concluding one on "The Renaissance Ferment", which traces the course of the quickening current through the other European lands. And the medial chapters deal with the ideas and ideals, the women, the characteristic types — scholar, artist, courtier — social and political institutions and conditions of the epoch. It is a book at once readable and scholarly, and worthy of a place on the shelf beside those of Burckhardt, Symonds, Villari, Yriarte, Zeller, and de la Clavière.

In 1895, before the self-styled young intellectuals of today had found their voices, Sir William Watson wrote a poem called "Apologia" in which he defended himself against attacks from the Nonconformists. He cried:

> Is the Muse
> Fallen to a thing of Mode, that must each year
> Supplant her derelict self of yester-year?

Now that same writer has published "A Hundred Poems" (Dodd, Mead), chosen by him as his best to prove the worth of the established method and theme. He is, indeed, "one whose

lips inherit some far echo" of the tones of England's greatest poets, nor is that echo empty of beauty. He shows what value it may be "to tread in nobler footsteps than mine own". Humble before the singers of old, he is proud before the poets of today. This book shows him to be more than the poet of a solitary verse (his "April, April" is generally known). If one is given to the habit of checking interesting lines or entire poems, there is much in this collection to check, unless the manner must be modern to be good.

Would that our college library had contained a copy of "Representative American Short Stories" edited by Alexander Jessup (Allyn, Bacon). For its publication some ten years ago would have saved us many trips to magazine files and miscellaneous volumes in quest of such standbys of the English department as "Rappaccini's Daughter", "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The Jumping Frog", and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat". Surely the seventy-four stories here reproduced furnish a wide choice of assignments for collateral reading. Beginning with "Chariessa; or, A Pattern for the Sex", published anonymously in 1788, the anthology takes us by chronological steps to such contemporaries as Irvin Cobb, Katharine Fullerton Gerould, Theodore Dreiser, and Charles Caldwell Dobie. An appendix contains a bibliography for the study of the short story in general, and of individual writers. Last of all comes a reference list of some 3,500 stories and anthologies.

In fifteen years of wandering over "Old Indian Trails" (Houghton Mifflin) Walter McClintock, an American forester, was adopted by a Blackfoot chief, given the name of White Weasel and a seat in the most sacred councils of the tribe, and assigned the task of recording Indian rites and ancient lore as practised by the red men who raised their tepees at the foot of the Rockies. The generation Mr. McClintock writes about is gone today. Their best minds — the chiefs and medicine men — saw the rising tide of a rapacious civilization creeping toward them. Finding one white man with a "good heart", they filled his notebooks full of songs and stories, accounts of strange, primitive rites and elaborate ceremonies and incantations. They even allowed his camera to photograph their most intimate tribal affairs. For the general reader, there is perhaps too much of all this crammed into one volume. One could wish that there had not been so many notebooks! But for the student of a vanishing Amerindian civilization, the book is conveniently edited, with generous index and an appendix of medicinal herbs of the Blackfoot tribe. The most absorbing tales, like that of "The Beaver Bundle", have the charm of ancient Greek or Roman yarns. And it is doubtful if any book about the Indians contains more interesting bits of information relating to their communal organization, an organization that boasted a society of young dancing men called "The Hair-Parters", a self-appointed constabulary known as "The Brave Dogs", and a sinister body with Ku Kluxian tendencies who went under the name of "Kit Foxes".

Wilson Follett in recent years has seen the widespread epidemic of what he calls the "journalistic novel". It is the type most prevalent in contemporary English and American lit-

erature. The recognition of the place of this type of fiction has impelled him to add a new chapter to and bring out a revised edition of "The Modern Novel: A Study of the Purpose and Meaning of Fiction" (Knopf). He epitomizes the volume as "an attempt to trace the development of some important principles of fictional criticism during the two centuries of the novel in English, and to show how the development of these principles has in turn altered the shape of the modern novel". Few persons interested in criticism will agree with everything Mr. Follett says, because he covers so much ground that some one of his many contentions is almost certain to force disagreement. That, however, adds to the book's value. It stimulates the reader to ponder himself on the modern novel and to look rather critically at the critics. So many people take books as they do meals — once down they are soon forgotten unless they nauseate, and the nausea is always temporary. It would be little exaggeration to say that the contemporary novel which inspires Mr. Follett's new chapter has given him acute indigestion, while readers who know little of greater literature have stomachs unused to a better diet and so digest today's aliment with ease and rapidity. The book is another attempt to force readers to realize what their diet really is and, perhaps, why.

Youth which grows despondent at literary or any other sort of failure can find comfort in Hermann Sudermann's "The Book of My Youth" (Harper), translated by Wyndham Harding. This reviewer is not qualified to speak for old — or even middle — age, but he hazards the belief that in the time wasting, extravagant, and foolish behavior of callow Sudermann there is much to amuse because it suggests similar follies in almost anyone's life. The first part of the book, when early memory is squeezed for every drop of recollection, is a beautifully written tale. It might be fiction, and as such is above a great majority of the popular biographical novels. The latter half of the generous volume is of the struggles of this German novelist and playwright to avoid oblivion. It is the life itself rather than the manner of telling which holds the greater fascination here. Aside from the value of this work as a biography, it gives a clear picture of the early years of the men who were the governing adults at the time of the war.

Though they liked to refer piously to those unfortunates who were convicted of "Witchcraft in Salem Village" (Houghton Mifflin) as "firebrands of hell", our forefathers did not, as is popularly supposed, ever burn a witch. John Fiske's book, therefore, might be said to erase that part of the smudge that mars the early history of New England. There still remains, however, an appalling description of hysterical trials, unjust convictions, hanging and torture of innocent victims often cursed with no greater demon than common sense. The little volume, composed of a chapter lifted from the author's "New France and New England", is now reprinted as a souvenir of Salem town, lest we forget what crimes are committed in the name of righteousness.

A series of brilliant essays by John Cowper Powys, on authors as widely different as Voltaire and Joseph Conrad, has recently been made acces-

sible again in "Suspended Judgments" (American Library Service). A further attraction is a very fine preface by Ludwig Lewisohn. The book is partly a protest against hasty judgment and faulty perspective. It is a plea for a more sympathetic understanding of what is being judged, more serenity on the part of the critic, and more disinterestedness and clarity of criticism. The essays themselves are striking examples of the art of discrimination, and of the writer's sensitiveness and appreciation of beauty.

Dr. Hugh Robert Mill's "The Life of Sir Ernest Shackleton" (Little, Brown) is a reverent but quite unsentimental account by one who was on intimate terms with the famous explorer during the last twenty years of his life. It may claim to be an authoritative account, for the author had access to the family's correspondence and wrote with their full cooperation. The man whom he describes is perhaps not the wisest of men, but he is singularly direct, honest, courageous, modest, and as inconsiderate of self as he is considerate of others.

"The Powder of Sympathy" (Doubleday, Page) contains further selections from the column of Christopher Morley, senior member of Heywood Broun and Company. He likes the "Civilization in the United States" of Matthew Arnold, and dislikes the cooperative product of the thirty more or less young intellectuals, "a gloomy book, rather strongly flavored with intellectual ammonia". Yet he cannot restrain his enthusiasm over Santayana's "Character and Opinion in the United States", which is hardly more complimentary or hopeful. There are charm and humor aplenty in the book, and among other things a penetrating analysis of Lord Northcliffe, who, it is true, "wielded terrific power", but "a power that dealt mainly in ephemeral and unimportant things"; and who to succeed in what he wanted "did not mind failure in other realms of life".

Two of the ultimate twelve volumes are now added to the two already published of "The New Larned History" (C. A. Nichols), a historical encyclopædia in which the articles are composed almost entirely of extracts from the works of great writers, historians, ethnologists, and so on. The reader may now draw upon it for information about anything from the letter A to Sir Martin Frobisher. The work is excellently arranged and indexed; it is liberally provided with maps, illustrations, and texts of documents; and it is up to date.

In "Dante, the Man and the Poet" (Appleton), Mary Bradford Whiting presents a chronological study of the Florentine poet's life in an easy, narrative style. Although the biographer's exhaustive study is apparent, one senses a lack of the artistic and romantic treatment which the subject presupposes. The book is written around the climax — Dante's highest achievement, the "Divina Commedia". The development of the poet's inspiration for this work is traced from its inception to its execution, when all the ideals, the love, and the hope pent in Dante's breast for years were given utterance.

Thomas L. Masson has written a pleasant book with a serious purpose, "That Silver Lining" (Doubleday,

Page), the main theme being that happiness is a process of growth. In simple language and in a thoughtful, straightforward manner, he cheerfully puts down his theories about dispensing with worry, lessening fear, and developing one's capacities. Some of these arguments are convincing because of their complete sincerity. But rather more seems to be material that has been written before, and has not been presented here in a more tangible or usable form.

Among the pieces collected by Edgar A. Guest in his latest book, "The Passing Throng" (Reilly, Lee), there is one based on the dictum that conscience is a man's true critic. So all a reviewer can say about it is that Mr. Guest's conscience, like the literary consciences of T. S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein, is a conscience gone wrong. Nothing is too banal, too insignificant, or, as Mr. Guest's enthusiasts would put it, too homely, for his moralizing. Perhaps it is not too much to say that a blind spot toward the ridiculous is the one characteristic that he shares with poets of a vastly different idiom. To comprehend fully the cosmic significance of "The Carpet on the Stairs", "The Little Clothes Line", "The Tumbler at the Sink", "When the Soap Gets in Your Eye", and "Whooping Cough" one must be endowed with an extraordinarily low or perhaps — who knows? — an unusually high order of intelligence.

Joseph Quincy Adams, professor of English in Cornell University, in preparing his elaborate "A Life of William Shakespeare" (Houghton Mifflin) has done more than just throw together the facts of this man's cycle from Stratford-on-Avon and back. What he has attempted to do in this biography he tells in his preface:

> Next to presenting Shakespeare's biography with clarity, I have sought to picture the dramatist against a background of contemporary theatrical life. However much we may think of him as a genius apart, to himself and to his age he appeared primarily as a busy actor associated with the leading stock company of his time; as a hired playwright — often, indeed, a mere cobbler of old plays — writing that his troupe might successfully compete with rival organizations; and, finally, as a theatrical proprietor, owning shares in two of the most flourishing playhouses in London. Thus his whole life was centered in the stage, and his interests were essentially those of his "friends and fellows", the actors, who affectionately called him "our Shakespeare". To portray the dramatist, therefore, in the atmosphere in which he lived and worked seemed to me the correct procedure.

It only remains for the reviewer to say that Mr. Adams has been true to his purpose, in addition to which he has presented his collected information in a delightfully pleasing fashion. The volume is a handsome one, fully illustrated with pictures not generally seen in Shakespeare's biographies.

No subject is too important or too trivial to gain the gently satiric attention of Hilaire Belloc in his casual essays, casually entitled "On" (Doran). He rushes with heavy artillery to defend the word "and" — only to betray the harmless thing in his last paragraph (or does he?). He discourses learnedly on "The United Poets", flings an impish brick at the "Mumbo-Jumbo" of officialdom, and rhapsodizes over the beauty of the cathedral at Seville. Always he writes with keen humor, rambling ease, and a quaint individuality of manner that keeps the reader always in a pleasant state of uncertainty. One feels that in the next sentence Mr. Belloc may say almost anything.

"The Red Man in the United States" by G. E. E. Lindquist (Doran) is a vast and authoritative work studying the social, economic, and religious life of the Indian. It was prepared under the auspices of the Committee on Social and Religious Surveys and with the cooperation of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Besides taking up many phases of Indian life, this treatise supplies a useful classification of the various tribes. Its general attitude toward the Indian is sympathetic but unromantic; it shows him neither as "noble savage" nor as "vermin of the plains", but simply as material of which tactful treatment may create a good American citizen. The influence of its protecting ægis is felt in an insistence upon missions and the work of conversion.

The life of Thomas Nelson Page was well worth recording in its intimate details, and surely no better informed biographer could have been found than his brother Rosewell Page, whose record of the charming personality and the high career of the author and ambassador has recently been published (Scribner). The earlier part of the book gives a vivid picture of old Virginia family life, amusing anecdotes of the many colored servants of the Page family and a moving account of the heavy burdens which fell to southern boys during the days just following the Civil War. Later chapters tell of the happier, fortune filled days of Page's successful law practice, his authorship, and his life abroad during the difficult period of the Great War. The book has no literary style but it is, after all, a real biography in which the character of Thomas Nelson Page emerges happily.

Good sense and a fine literary instinct trained to more than adequate expression make Vernon Lee's nineteenth book, "The Handling of Words" (Dodd, Mead), interesting and worth while reading. It is dogmatic at times, too logical for an illogical world, but it should prove invaluable to a young writer since it answers so many of his questions, enters into the discussion of so many matters not taken up by editors in the brief space of their rejection slips. There is much good criticism, and really fine analysis of masters of English and French prose. There is absolutely no sentimentality, not even a glamour. The author manages to remain so utterly above the clouds that she misses occasional effects of color and personality in the writers whom she discusses, and these are surely important. Art is the object of her adoration, and its methods are her study and her pleasure, a pleasure which she has, very beautifully, handed on in this book devoted to the elucidation of art's means of expressing itself.

"Writing to Sell" by Edwin Wildman (Appleton) is a light exposition of first aids in the art of writing for quick payment. Mr. Wildman, for many years an editor, succeeds to an appreciable degree in the somewhat difficult task of applying formula to practice, outlining various definite forms, methods, and themes helpful to the novice. It is a good book for the newspaper journalist who occasionally seeks the more elusive literary markets. A calendar for writers, as an appendix feature, sets down seasonable hints giving the proper advance date at which such material should be prepared — a boon to the quantity writer who must produce just so much grist annually.