RECENT BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

THERE is a defenseless naïveté about Algernon Blackwood's "Episodes Before Thirty" (Dutton) which, in these days of sophisticated autobiography, shields its refreshing simplicity as the frank chatter of a child is guarded. Blackwood tells of his step from an English family of accepted respectability into America, where he stumbled into misfortune because his eyes were not and could not be trained to the perception of rascality. His unpleasant escapades led him into a mysticism which threw a peaceful shade from the blinding disillusionment that each year brought. In telling how the generosity of nature meant compensation for human selfishness, he rather impels one to star gazing in the hope of acquiring his consoling perspective. The entertaining anecdotes are told in the graceful undisturbing swing of complacent reflective maturity.

One never really knows a pedagogue until one sees him away from his classroom. When one glimpses him out on a bit of a spree one really understands the man who, at times, is a teacher. N. Bryllion Fagin, dean of the School of Arts of Research University, has been out on a "toot". During school months he tells youngsters how to write short stories for a living. In "Short Story Writing — An Art or a Trade?" (Seltzer) he admits that collegiate instruction in short

story writing clips the wings of genius and makes artizans out of artists. Here is his relief from preaching the commercialism that draws so many into the short story field. Here is his honest idea of what the short story is, can be, and should be. He is merciless, but as entertaining as any professor we have ever read on his own subject. The book is primarily for those who have been told to keep away from literature and write according to pattern, to whom it gives consolation for disappointed genius and disgusted ambition.

There are abundant opportunities for good Americans to laugh at the English — and the other way round — but there are far too few chances for us to laugh with them. In fact, British humor has been known to induce a sense of deep pessimism and distrust in the bosoms of those who snicker at Gallagher and Shean and laugh uproariously at the indefatigable George M. Cohan. So we have to thank whatever gods there be in the world of printers' ink for a thoroughly amusing book from the pen of the famous A. P. H. of "Punch". With equal facility the burlesques and droll dialogues of "The Man About Town" (Doubleday, Page) should stir the risibilities of American readers from New York to San Francisco, as they have moved to a possibly more decorous laughter the readers of that famous British journal. With A. P. Herbert — to give his full name — and George, his companion-in-search-of-a-good-time, you may laugh (up your sleeve, of course) at the serious foibles and droll pretensions of our so called civilized society. We are aware that it is no new thing to satirize spiritualism, golf, Turkish baths, charity, and little theatre organizations, clubs, and even the telephone book, but we know of no humorist who does it with the grace and deep seated chuckling wit of A. P. H. So dull a matter as the author's correspondence with the Port of London authority regarding a flight of steps to the Thames at the foot of his garden wall becomes a hilarious adventure. As a book to leave in the room of the tired week end guest we recommend "The Man About Town".

The already abundant Carlyle bibliography is enriched by the new collection of "Letters of Thomas Carlyle" (Stokes), comprising the epistolary record of Carlyle's friendship with John Stuart Mill, John Sterling, and Robert Browning. The occasion offered when Mill's unpublished letters were purchased at public auction in 1922 by the Carlyle's House Memorial Trust. Alexander Carlyle has furnished the necessary explanatory notes, and an index. The letters work no changes concerning Carlyle's life and work, for the main outlines have been fixed by the hands busy at correcting J. A. Froude's biography. These letters illustrate again the phenomenal alertness and gusto of the man, his erudition, his racy topicality, his vigorous, ejaculatory dogmatism. The style was the man! — in letters as in more extended literary forms.

Anthologies are the hardy perennials of modern literature. Each season has its crop of collected editions of the poets, with verses brought together according to the set plan or capricious taste of the compiler. "Verse of Our Day" (Appleton) contains, in the words of the introduction, "poems that seem to breathe the modern spirit". To choose "three hundred and forty-seven poems rep-

resenting the work of one hundred and thirty-four poets" (English and American) is no mean task, but we have a feeling that the editors, Margery Gordon and Marie B. King, subordinated sound critical judgment to a pedantic plan of elaborate classification. Under many heads and subheads: Nature, Experience, Love and Friendship, Memory, etc., they group much verse that is pleasant but second rate, and only a comparatively small number of poems that seem to us to have artistic permanence and genuine fire. A list of contemporary verse that has been set to music, at the end of the volume, may be of some value to the singer, but the brief biographical notes that precede it are surely too meagre to give either information or guidance toward an evaluation of the poets here presented.

"Embassies of Other Days" (Doran), as Lady Paget calls her two volumes of reminiscences from 1839 to 1893, is a thoroughly enjoyable book of memoirs. A Saxon Countess of Hohenthal, from childhood a personal friend of German royal and princely personages, maid of honor at Queen Victoria's court (1858), she married an English diplomat, Augustus Paget, and as his wife came in touch at the European capitals, especially Vienna, with all who were most representative of the society of her period. Lady Paget's reminiscences are simply written; there is no affectation, no pose. They have the appeal made by sincerity, a sense of humor, and a clear observation. They are a colorful, intimate invocation of the radiant Europe of royal and imperial courts between which and the ruined Europe of today yawns the gulf of the Great War: a picturesque record of a past which already seems as remote as Rome's Augustan age or the century of Louis XIV.

There are experiences so unusual that one must revise the entire range of one's preconceived notions in order to adjust old beliefs to new facts. Something of the sort seems to have happened to Bertram and Dora Russell, and the result is "The Prospects of Industrial Civilization" (Century). Both saw Bolshevik Russia in 1920 and then set about reconciling their totally different reactions. A stay in non-industrial China aided in the formation of new ideas. As a result, these two have come to believe that "the important fact of the present time is not the struggle between capitalism and socialism but the struggle between industrial civilization and humanity." "R. U. R." and "The World We Live In" seem to have expressed this idea in dramatic form. The first half of the book is devoted to the exposition of this idea. Industrialism, it is pointed out, has changed the nature of property and of nationalism, and we must accordingly change ideas of them based on pre-industrial conceptions. Unless, the authors warn, industrialism works harmoniously, a process which requires socialism and some degree of internationalism, it may be expected to destroy itself and civilization. In that case, humanity can begin all over again, as in the dark ages. The second half of the book strives, with less success, to indicate the approach to the new social order.

Max Beerbohm is a small bright flame which miraculously keeps its light under the glare of many thousand candle power incandescent lamps. Giants and semi-giants toil mightily and great novels and short stories are

born in pain; Max turns from the easel to dash off a thumbnail essay between a smart tea and a smarter dinner and many turn from the work of Giants to smile at the essay. Limited, yes, unbearably limited perhaps, but for all his urbanity, kindly and not incapable of fine anger. His "Yet Again" (Knopf) is made up of short and relatively unimportant essays, but they all bear the cachet of a master. That they stimulate with the sharpest wit in England—which in our opinion means in the world—goes without saying.

"The New Larned History" (C. A. Nichols), as previously noted, is an historical encyclopædia in which the articles are composed almost entirely of extracts from the works of great writers, historians, ethnologists, and so on. Four more of the ultimate twelve volumes have been added to the four already issued, carrying the reader from Froebel to Rome. The work is excellently arranged and indexed; is liberally provided with maps, illustrations, and texts of documents; and is up to date.

The most interesting fact about "Illini Poetry, 1918-1923" (Covici-McGee) is that it is the first book of verse to present the work of undergraduates in a middle western state university. It is strange indeed that we have not seen this book long before, so sure have been the literary proconsuls, stationed at the Chicago legation, that the middle west poetical renaissance was in train. (The inaccurate use of the word "renaissance" is a critical convention always to be used in discussing the middle west.) This book, produced in the poetry "workshop" at the University of Illinois, is edited by Bruce Weirick, a faculty member whose labor has not flagged in the promotion of the poetry society at Illinois in the five years of its existence. This is an excellent book of college poetry; which is to say, it is intelligent, self conscious; either imitative of the received models, or in a mood of studied revolt. The subject matter inclines toward love—but a love more Cyrenaic than the loves of earlier college poets—a love in which courtship, plighted troths, and honorable intentions pale before the counted pulses of a moment's ecstasy. There is, too, an infusion of philosophy, collegiate interests, and nature in her prairie modes. But it is the book's paganism, so unsuspected by the seaboarder, that makes the book for the student of literary currents. It is not all corn they hoe out in Illinois—nor they, perhaps, who hoe it!

Sidney Dark and Rowland Grey have not used the most interesting method in producing "W. S. Gilbert, His Life and Letters" (Doran). While they have gone to original sources for information concerning this famous "Bab Ballads" man, in giving the results of their studies to the public they have been content to assemble those original sources without much interesting interpretation or comment. Every page in the book is heavy with small type quotations. One enjoys reading what Gilbert wrote, and one enjoys, too, what others have written of Gilbert. Yet, to make a book of this sort suitable for the average reader, there must be more than a collection of autographed letters and verses. One would not read the book to find an interesting life or man. Only those eager to read details of Gilbert himself would make the venture. Perhaps a great love for the man might

cast a spell over the reader, but there is nothing in the handling of the biographical matter to create that love.

Advertising beginners and professionals will both profit by the unique approach to the principles of their craft embodied in "A Textbook of Advertisement Designing and Writing" (Dutton) by B. C. Woodcock, an English authority. The value of this volume lies in its thorough handling of the mechanical elements of an advertisement: the author tabulates 869 ways of grouping them. The information offered on psychology is quite slender and rather transatlantic. The illustrations of layouts are of practical help.

It is unfortunate that a painter of the admirable qualities of Sir William Orpen should undertake to do a work such as "The Outline of Art" (Putnam). It is unfortunate because one automatically expects other than elementary things from him — expects them even in spite of the publisher's announcement that "this book is not intended for the specialist", etc. The feeling is, if only an ethical one, that Sir William has no business writing art primers. One does not look for weather almanacs from Madame Curie. The book — the first of a two volume series—is concise, even to the point of being juiceless; replete with such yarns as, "The boy Master discovered drawing at his father's knee"; and is accompanied by moderately well chosen but immoderately badly printed reproductions of celebrated paintings. The color reproductions offend particularly.

There is a suspended quality to Japanese poetry which original English verse does not eclipse. It comes from an incompleteness, a faith in the imagination of the reader. Sometimes it seems to find its purpose in a wistfulness too tender to express itself entirely, too subtle to yield itself to words. Curtis Hidden Page has succeeded in carrying this quality into his translations. As they appear throughout "Japanese Poetry, An Historical Essay" (Houghton Mifflin), they capture the reader susceptible to nuances and implications. Here are two chosen at random, not because they excel the others but because they are representative:

> Admired and admirer, both must go.
> They bloom, I look . . . .
> They fade . . . . and even so . . . .
>
> O leaves of Autumn, strewing all the ground,
> Whence come ye? — many more than e'er I found
> Alive upon the trees.

Mr. Page sketches the history of Japanese poetry from its first use, and he does it with a touch that pleases. His method of scattering the poems throughout the pages seems much more effective than grouping them at the end. There are pictures, too, to aid in creating an oriental atmosphere in this well made limited edition.

It is with distaste that we read unqualified enthusiasm. Coming from the author of "Futility" it seems especially out of place. Yet in "Anton Chehov, A Critical Study" (Duffield), William Gerhardi bubbles without restraint. There is a scholarly air about the book, despite which it can see nothing but superlative genius in the great Russian. This is more than a following of the current worship of pre-revolutionary Russia. Mr. Gerhardi has taken Chehov to his heart in a genuine embrace of love. This explains the manner of "Futility",

but it does not excuse too much exuberance. Perfection has not been reached in literature, and it is hard to read one who seems to believe it has.

Those who are unable to digest anything of a more powerful or stimulating nature, and yet have a taste for the charming and intimate, will find E. V. Lucas's new little book unusually delightful. It deals with nothing in particular, but much in general. Trivial reminiscence is here, brief sketches of everyday occurrences and things — things which most of us pass by unnoticed. "Luck of the Year" (Doran) leaves one conscious of having been entertained with a gentle friendliness that is satisfying.

That the average man thinks mistakenly of child labor as a matter of sweatshops, insanitary conditions, and vague cruelties, and assumes that those are the only reasons why it should be abolished, is more or less the keynote of Raymond G. Fuller's "Child Labor and the Constitution" (Crowell). His aim, arising out of years of valuable work for child welfare, is to make that average man — the man who can help — understand that, even though conditions of child labor have improved considerably, it is not so much what child labor *is* as what child labor *means* that counts— what it means to the generations living and to come; what it means to the Constitution. Mr. Fuller's statistics, his human documents, his forceful and soundly backed remarks fascinate and horrify. Yet all the while one gets the feeling that the author is being moderate, if anything, in his choice of material. The book is a worthwhile contribution toward the stamping out of a great and far reaching evil.

There is a dispassionate quality about "The Russian Soviet Republic" (Century) that makes one welcome this third book dealing with the big economic experiment written by Edward Alsworth Ross, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin. Yet, for all its dispassionate treatment of history, there is apparent a tremendous passion for truth. Professor Ross is disgusted with the lies that have come out of Russia — lies emanating from the two conflicting political camps. He is sick of the newspaper stories. For his material he has gone to original sources, and the story he tells is amazing in its revelations. No book on Russia that has appeared since the revolution seems so just and fair. Professor Ross does not support the tenets of the Bolsheviki, but he will not bend to echo the lies of the émigrés.

"Masquerade" (McBride) by Ben Ray Redman has much of the disillusioned tone of Thomas Hardy's "Songs of Satire". There is a touch of bitterness running through these well built verses—bitterness softened, perhaps, by an ironic smile. Mr. Redman has taken his bitter medicine of sophistication, but when that tonic was down he was still able to smile. The taste is still on his lips, but he forces them into a grimace of sardonic enjoyment. There is a robustness about the book, despite its simple construction and its slender form, which makes much of the current poetical output seem colorless as plants raised without sunlight.

Once a week in the London "Daily Chronicle" there is a little essay by C. Lewis Hind under the general title of "Life and I". These have been collected and published with the same

name (Dodd, Mead) and they make as delightful a volume of informal articles as one can find. They are leisurely and philosophic, touched with humor and strongly colored with sentiment. Mr. Hind's space was limited to half a column, so that all the essays are short; despite the rambling way in which he drifts from one subject to another, there is an artistic unity to each. The subtitle reads: "The Era of Julius Cæsar, Aged 3-4." Julius Cæsar is the child in the house and a most lovable little fellow, who claims and deserves much of the credit for the success of the "arkikles". Whether the subject is gipsies or Wren's churches, the pervading influence is Julius Cæsar's.

In "A Story Teller: Forty Years in London" (Doran) W. Pett Ridge, the author of twenty two novels and a number of short stories, shows atmosphere, periods, and persons of London during forty years of his career. Such visitors as Mark Twain and Booker Washington are mentioned, and Dickens has a chapter. A brief index supplies the important names included in the book. The chapter "Songs of the Street" is a complete essay in itself; "Our Manners" and "The Cockney Humour" will appeal especially to those who are students of London Town as an historic field. There is a frontispiece portrait of the author, and six portrait drawings of him.

When you look over "The Complete Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson" (Scribner), the first collected edition of his poetical works, you will probably find that you have been belittling him as a poet. Here is much beauty and some grandeur. Here, true, are many verses which reek with sentiment to a point of annoyance; but over against them can be placed "Ticonderoga", "Requiem", "I Will Make You Brooches and Toys for Your Delight", the exquisite "Tropic Rain", and many more. What a curiously diverse author R. L. S. was. How bad he is at worst and how many of us, alas, like best the worst in him. Let's not forget the best of him however.

Likely enough, someone possessed of the requisite Urim and Thummim can see in "The Poet Assassinated" all that the writer of the introduction does. Unfortunately, those lacking the blessed Egyptian spectacles may think that the Broom Publishing Company and Matthew Josephson wasted precious time, paper, and excellent composition and presswork on this translation from the work of the late Guillaume Apollinaire—otherwise Wilhelm de Kostrovitzki. The plot of this production is touched up here and there with details concerning the functions of reproduction and the processes of metabolism. Otherwise it fulfils the translator's description: "form that is complete (sic) unrepresentative, with perpetual digressions and asides."

The French Revolutionists claimed to have made greater progress in six years than their predecessors had made in six centuries. They had not witnessed the decade 1914–1923, the events and consequences of which throw into comparative insignificance this earlier pinnacle of historic mutation. Had they clairvoyantly forseen this later period, their assertion might have been less bold. Realizing, then, that a span of time is, to the historian, of importance only in relation to the events and changes which

it brings forth, one does not wonder that more than one third of the revised and enlarged edition of Charles Downer Hazen's "Europe Since 1815" (Holt) should be given to the years subsequent to the Serbian assassination. The work of an accredited historian, "Europe Since 1815" is a thorough, analytical, and suggestive presentation of European history from the downfall of Napoleon to the present occupation of the Ruhr.

There is, about "American Artists" (Scribner) by Royal Cortissoz, the evidence of much erudition, sound decision, and an unmistakable air of charm. In his papers on Vedder, Childe Hassam, Arthur B. Davies, and others Mr. Cortissoz writes not only with facility but with conviction. His manner of retailing his knowledge to the reader is admirable. His chapters, as for instance "The Lure of Technic", "The Slashing Stroke", "Women in Impressionism", show a freshness and an ability to find virgin fields and new lines of thought—the latter an unusual thing at this stage of art dissertation. The illustrations are, for the most part, commendable not only from the point of reproduction but as nice selections. Mr. Cortissoz has done more than simply add one more art book to an already wearisomely long line—he has done a Whistler in prose.

The possibility of writing too intimately is exemplified in "Together" (McBride) by Norman Douglas. Here is the record of a season spent in an Alpine Village. It is full of the first person pronoun. W. H. Hudson could do that, and the more intimate he became, the better we enjoyed it. But there is no Hudson personality here to justify the intimacies. Mr. Douglas may be a delightful companion, but his book does not carry charm enough to hold one intent upon his diary.

"Private" Harold R. Peat, Canadian hero and author of a once famous war book, has not rested upon the glory of his Victoria Cross. During the past few years he has visited more than a dozen countries, always asking questions and always thinking. At last, in "The Inexcusable Lie" (Barse, Hopkins), he tells his conclusion: that war is bestial, cowardly, degrading, and encouragement to fraud and deceit, and (save in the compulsion of some actual emergency) a form of national treason; that men, boys at heart, go to war only because they have been swindled into believing that it is gallant, glorious, patriotic, a great deal of fun, and an ideal that calls forth emulation. This belief, skilfully imparted by home, school, and society, is *the inexcusable lie*, and the author calls upon these institutions, in the name of the doomed innocents, to tell the truth. Mr. Peat writes crudely but very clearly and with intense conviction. He touches upon sides of the question that only a soldier—a thoughtful soldier—could know about; but, in the opinion of this reviewer, he attributes too much influence over young minds to the teachings of the school, and far too little to those of the street, the ball field, and the barber shop.

Gradually the sections of our country are becoming conscious of their local flavors. Richmond, capital of the old south, has long been known for the charm of its life and atmosphere. But never, probably, has anyone written of it with so keen a sense for the feeling of place combined with so

competent a knowledge of city history as Mary Newton Stanard exhibits in "Richmond, Its People and Its Story" (Lippincott). Wife of a local historian and scion of a distinguished family, Mrs. Stanard is naturally fitted to sketch a story of the leisurely growth of this curious town from its pioneer rudeness, through days of political splendor, social gaiety, the grimness of war, at last to the urge of progress. Prejudiced, of course, this account is so thorough yet so sprightly as to give the reader an uncanny sensation of hearing the tale from the lips of a wise woman who has herself lived through it all.

"American Poetry Since 1900" (Holt) is a new and really de luxe edition of Louis Untermeyer's earlier volume. It contains much information concerning American poetry, and there is no questioning Untermeyer's genuinely honest critical viewpoint. His judgments are formed from a love of poetry and a study of it. He has developed a somewhat tight but commendable viewpoint, from which he proceeds. Those tendencies and those poets which fall outside the rays of this viewpoint he quite deliberately slights; but for the most part his view is fairly inclusive. He has made many additions of names and of conclusions to this new volume. Just as it was one of the best guides to American poetry in its old guise, it is an even better one in its new form.

When the Department of Justice sent Kate Richards O'Hare to prison for alleged violation of the Espionage Act, it unwittingly gave an impetus to the cause of American prison reform that could not have been gained in any other way. Her fourteen months' martyrdom at Jefferson City, Missouri, resulted in the most terrific arraignment of prison abuses that has ever found its way out of those cold, grey walls. "In Prison" (Knopf) is not pleasant reading; no book written from the "inside" by a reasonably accurate observer ever could be. Like other social and political idealists committed to serve penal sentences, Mrs. O'Hare points out that behind the clanging doors of an American penal institution the Dark Ages rule. In the face of her damning evidence of waste, cruelty, unspeakable filth, and moral degradation in the administration of a state prison, it is difficult to share the optimism of certain reformers and impossible to understand the sentimentalism of others. It is shocking that the extremity of martyrdom should have been necessary to produce this brilliant study in criminology.

How two people can get passage on a freighter and embark with as little enthusiasm as one finds in the first chapter of "We Explore the Great Lakes" by Webb Waldron (Century), is difficult to imagine. The monotony, glare, and heat are emphasized until one wonders why they did not give up the project. They didn't, however, and from the account of Duluth's climb to supremacy right through to the very last word on page 384, the book is filled with likable people, fascinating bits of history, and description of country that will certainly create a desire to see the truly Great Lakes first. Mr. Waldron has tried to please everybody; for the "readers who love statistics" he has injected occasional doses of figures, but not enough to spoil his work. The book is delightfully illustrated by Marion P. Waldron.