IN BRIEF REVIEW

JEAN KENYON MACKENZIE'S new book "African Clearings" (Houghton Mifflin) contains much that is interesting even to one who is entirely out of sympathy with missionaries and their ways. Undoubtedly she is sincere; undoubtedly, too, she is as incapable of understanding the psychology of her black flock as she is of sensing the true portent of staccato drum talk, or the flickering forest shadows. Emphasis is too often wrongly placed; too much credence is put in surface things. The complacent smugness evinced over a heathen turned from his heathenism, jars. So do the gurgles of joy over a woman who embraces Christianity and covers up the body God gave her. There is real drama in the incident of the postboy who died rather than give up his mail pouch. It is dismissed in a short paragraph. But then he was probably a heathen. Had he died defending the Bible, his martyrdom would have been memorialized by a whole chapter. But these essays are interesting. As interesting as the letters, say, of a New England social worker who possesses a graphic pen, is a keen observer of trivial details, yet fails to understand the people among whom she works and cries "Success" when the village drunkard — unable to get more liquor — loudly extols the glory of water. *Ma yi ma simsan* — which, being interpreted, is, "I weep and I remember."

A collection of editorials may not sound like very inspiring reading, but when they are culled from the columns of the Emporia, Kansas, "Gazette", and the writer thereof is none other than William Allen White, it is a different story; not the endless rotation of tax reform, bonus, League of Nations, and local politics, but the emanations of a sympathetic, understanding heart as well as a keen and vigorous mind. When Helen Ogden Mahin in her introduction to Mr. White's "The Editor and His People" (Macmillan) explains that the "Gazette" has achieved its conspicuous influence and position by being "the unaffected expression of its editor's personality and the uncompromising organ of his convictions", we find it easy to agree with her. In editing the volume, Miss Mahin has displayed excellent judgment in grouping the selected editorials, which range from intimate, homely topics to subjects of national and international significance. Mr. White has prepared a brief introduction to each group and added characteristic footnotes in the light of thirty years in the editor's chair. As he expresses it, we now find the stand-patter gone and the progressive rampant in his place.

We presume that the proverbial rolling stone failed to accumulate a mossy covering because it was primarily occupied with the business of rolling. We of this enlightened age might term such futile activity mental petrifaction. How much more fruitful are the lapidary revolutions of E. A. Brayley Hodgetts, who gathered an immense amount of moss while rolling around from place to place! Mr. Hodgetts, in "Moss from a Rolling Stone" (Dutton), tells in a breezy newspapery manner anecdotes, incidents, and episodes of many years spent in travel and observation of

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the frailties of humankind. He is possessed of a keen sense of humor which brightens many pages of the book, and his style is brisk and refreshing. Mr. Hodgetts is apparently interested in everything, and succeeds admirably in arousing the same interest in the reader.

The short articles — extending from a paragraph to a few pages — selected by H. I. Woolf from Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary" (Knopf) are on whatever happened to interest, stimulate, or antagonize Voltaire at the time — including most of the things under the sun. They range from one end of the alphabet to the other and (originally published as "Questions on the Encyclopædia") end with a series of rhetorical questions without answers, entitled "Why?" The amazing variety in the subjects is equaled by the variety in their treatment, this including in generous measure the intellectual and temperamental qualities associated with Voltaire's name.

J. Arthur Thomson's "Science Old and New" (Putnam) illustrates, according to the author, one method of describing the changes in the science of biology since Darwin's day, that of "selecting a number of arresting topics and discussing these in the light of recent advances". What he so describes is the "artistic masterpieces" which the world exhibits, the "fascinating ingenuities of organization, and intricate interweavings that make a pattern" (Professor Thomson is a vitalist); and his book is a collection of short, easy, chatty discourses on such matters as wax, antlers, milk, slavery in the insect world, the human hand, and so on.

A book need be neither profound nor memorable to be an acceptable adjunct on a sightseeing tour. So "Your Washington and Mine" (Scribner) may make a pleasant companion on a trip to the nation's capital. Louise Payson Latimer is neither too garrulous nor too technical a guide to the sights of the District of Columbia. Her historical and political comment is sufficient to form a background to matter which is largely descriptive of the physical aspect of Washington and its environs. Illustrations are plentiful and interesting.

That many a great writer has fared badly at the hands of his slow witted public is a lamentable fact and undeniable. That from the foregoing circumstance one may justly conclude that obscurity implies genius is a favorite form of critical dementia. For some years past the name of Ambrose Bierce has been a thing for dealers in rare books to conjure with. So high are the prices of his first and second editions that they are beyond the reach of any but the illiterate. At last is the veil sundered! Those enterprising Brothers Boni have seen fit to remove the bushel whereunder shone the brilliance that was Bierce. "In the Midst of Life" can now be purchased for a moderate sum. But, as Mélisande so pitifully repeats, "I am not gay." We have so often heard "Bierce, the Master of the Terrible" — "Bierce, the Explorer of the Soul" that, perhaps, appetite has died from sheer longevity. More reasonably one decides that the esoteric fame of Ambrose Bierce had its origin in the critical fallacy mentioned above; like glowworms he shines only in the dark. These stories have the mark of the heavy hand upon them. Death and insanity furnish the themes for them all. The manner of telling is crude and wearisome in the extreme. Throughout the entire book runs a thread of almost childish interest in the cadaver

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that is faintly amusing when it is not utterly repulsive. "In the Midst of Life" is an unusually deadly piece of work — incidentally it marks the passing of one more literary illusion.

The name Raisuli is fairly familiar to most of us. "Oh, he's one of those Hindus or South African bandit chiefs, or something!" Rosita Forbes in "The Sultan of the Mountains" (Holt) elaborates upon this idea and relates in intimate detail the life of an exceedingly picturesque character. The habits, philosophy, and religion of Raisuli and his followers are set forth in a narrative of absorbing interest. Mrs. Forbes is very much alive to the romantic possibilities of her subject, depicting the vigorous, semi barbaric existence of the Sultan of the Mountains (as Raisuli is called) with a most commendable melodramatic touch. The adventures of Raisuli are legion; and as one sits of an evening and whirls in imagination on horseback behind the flying cohorts of the hero, participates in the beautifully ingenious torture of some malefactor, or plays at primitive politics, something of the barbarian in one cries out for the carefree abandon of life in Africa. Yet in the light of civilized morning, the jovial cop on the corner is most comfortably reassuring.

The many who know the "Memoirs" of Casanova only by reputation will hardly be persuaded by Havelock Ellis's "Casanova, an Appreciation" (Luce) that they have missed a great deal. The "Appreciation", a critical essay, precedes three illustrative selections from the "Memoirs", one of which tells of Casanova's start in life at Rome, another of his escape from the Venetian prison, and a third of his life at Paris. Interesting and enlightening as the introduction is, it is a little too much for the subject matter which follows, and it cannot stand by itself. Ellis hails the diary as delightful reading. He declares the autobiography has "deep and permanent interest" on three counts: as a psychological study of a human type, as a good story, and as a picture of the times. He compares it to the contemporaneous autobiographical writings of Gozzi, Rousseau, Restif de la Bretonne, and Madame Roland, all of which it may surpass. But under the three headings given, Pepys' Diary exceeds it as the study of a human type; the story of Cellini's escape from prison makes a far more interesting tale than does Casanova's; and the stories of both these two are at least equal to the selections given by Ellis as a portrait of the times in which the author lived. Perhaps the fault of the volume at hand must lie in the meagre 150 pages of excerpts. Certainly, the matter in them does not fulfil the expectations raised by the "Appreciation".

The campaign biography of tradition may be held to rank, as literature, with the dime novel. Both productions were interesting and stimulating; both were written about flawless and heroic protagonists; neither was expected to be any truer to life than the paintings on campaign posters. "Alfred E. Smith: An American Career" (Seltzer) might have been that kind of book; it isn't. True, for some ninety pages the biography tells a tale of early struggles and privations and of success in spite of them. But thereafter, the career and principles of Governor Smith are portrayed through selections from his speeches, supplemented by sufficient comment from the author to explain the circumstances under which they were delivered. These addresses are more than readable — they are inter-

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esting. Fortunately, Smith's education and audiences deterred him from employing the embellished type of oratory that prevailed until the beginning of the century and still largely taints political addresses. His language is conversational without being commonplace. His ideas are not obscured by festooned verbiage. On occasion he can be simple and lofty at once. Nothing in the book adequately explains how a man with Smith's meagre schooling grew to be the figure that his present position and his speeches and actions in that position show him to be. Contemporaneous writing is commonly weak in that respect. Henry Moskowitz deserves credit for producing a biography whose virtues are not the author's but Al Smith's.

Writing verse is just play to Edgar A. Guest. In his "Rhymes of Childhood" (Reilly, Lee) we can almost see the poet tossing off these stanzas while he shoots marbles with the boys, rolls up his pants to go fishing, or salutes the flag in a stirring paroxysm of patriotism. He would go the limit, we fancy, to taste, vicariously, the joys and sorrows of boyhood, even to the point of taking castor oil! Moreover, administering this remedy seems to be one of his emotional complexes, equaled in intensity only by his mother complex. From the time a baby is born to the day when it takes its first step, every phase of its life becomes a subject for ecstatic celebration. We believe that, among other honors, Mr. Guest should be nominated poet laureate of motherhood. A child to him is a "little chap", a "tiny tot", a "little feller", or even a "laddie"; and a father is "pa" to the end of time. There seems to be an idea, current among those who do not know his verse, that here is a poet who honestly echoes the colloquialisms of his time. But we have looked in vain, through this and other volumes, to find popular speech that postdates the James Whitcomb Riley period. After all, Mr. Guest's reputation is built upon slavish imitation of the Hoosier poet, so that it is doubtful if, at this late date, accurate reproduction of everyday speech would add to his fame.

In his "From Goethe to Byron" (Dutton), William Rose, M.A., Ph.D., lecturer in the University of London, King's College, traces broadmindedly "the development of *Weltschmerz* in German Literature from 'Werther' to the beginning of the Romantic Movement . . . the dissonance between the ideal and the real, and the inability to adapt the ego completely to reality". Encouragingly psychoanalytical for a "doctor's dissertation", this volume is both readable and illuminative unto our own — as the author argues, somewhat similar — days of *Sturm und Drang*. For, as Georg Brandes has well said elsewhere, "Literary history is, in its profoundest significance, psychology, the study, the history of the soul."

The peculiar advantage of "The True Story of Woodrow Wilson", by David Lawrence (Doran), lies in the fact that the author has had unusual opportunities for personal acquaintance with Mr. Wilson, and has been in a position to make direct observations on the actions of the former president from his Princeton days until his death this year. Mr. Lawrence has written a thoroughly readable biography, and one that casts many interesting sidelights on the individuality of one of the most enigmatical public figures of recent years; he writes largely with the aim of vindicating Wilson, if not the policies of Wilson, but he proceeds as a clear sighted journalist rather than as a

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hero worshiper, and the book gains considerably in value owing to the fact that he can discern the blots on the escutcheon of his subject as well as his shining merits.

We do not recall that the macabre art of Guy de Maupassant has ever been more effectively displayed than in "Day and Night Stories" (Knopf), a new volume in the series of collected novels and stories edited by Ernest Boyd. A large burden of the praise, moreover, must go to the translator, Storm Jameson, who has succeeded in preserving brilliantly such Gallic nuances of feeling as others have lost or deliberately evaded. That in the human symphony de Maupassant has heard the raucous notes of greed, lust, revenge, and stupidity more often than those sweeter strains of sympathy and love, is evident to all who know his work. Former collections have not perhaps made so apparent the fact that it is his attitude of artistic and unmoral cynicism that unifies one of the most monumental achievements of modern literature. This series contains several new additions to the list of stories already translated into English. The scholarly, delicate, and thoroughly sensitive handling creates for readers of de Maupassant a new insight into the French national character and a wider knowledge of the human heart.

"Europe Since 1789" by Edward Raymond Turner of the University of Michigan (Doubleday, Page) is a continuation of the author's earlier "Europe, 1450–1789" and a revision and amplification of his subsequent "Europe, 1789–1920". The history of Europe from the days of the Ancien Régime which preceded the French Revolution is, in the light of the Great War, brought down to the beginning of 1924, with chief emphasis upon the economic, social, diplomatic, and military. Professor Turner addresses himself primarily to the student of history, and rather less to the general reader than does either Hazen or Gibbons. The volume is printed in large, clear type, with marginal notes, maps, bibliographies, appendix, a comprehensive index, and other devices to aid the student. One wishes, however, that the work were issued in two volumes.

Any seeker for a handbook to the powers in England's labor government will find nothing better than "England's Labour Rulers" by Iconoclast (Seltzer). The necessity of including twenty eight figures — each with a full page, pen and ink portrait by Sidney L. Hydeman — in a gallery of less than one hundred and fifty pages, has somewhat cramped our author's style. He has had to content himself with little more than a recording of dates, places, and previous offices. Indeed, Iconoclast's efforts to inject human drama into his thumbnail sketches becomes at times almost ludicrously reminiscent of one's senior classbook. When, for instance, we have learned the salient facts of Colonel Josiah Wedgwood's interesting, perhaps stimulating, career, we are inclined to be amused to hear that "'Jos' is the soul of kindness and has hosts of friends." Nevertheless, within its limits, we can recommend "England's Labour Rulers" as the best thing of its kind.

"Two spiritual leaders have emerged in our generation into new light, and have become generally intensified living forces. They are St. Francis of Assisi and George Fox of Fenny Drayton." So declares Rufus M. Jones in his introduction to the revised edition of "The Journal of George Fox", pre-

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pared and edited by Norman Penney (Dutton). George Fox, who lived from 1624 to 1691 and is remembered chiefly as the founder of the Society of Friends, left a valuable religious autobiography, which first appeared in 1694, accompanied by a preface by William Penn; and it is this volume of confessions, condensed and corrected, that is now offered to the public. A portion of the original introduction by William Penn is reproduced; and the volume as a whole will prove interesting, as Mr. Jones well points out, because "it embalms and treasures up the spirit and life-blood of a brave and honest man".

Writing of contemporary thought movements in a style that is philosophical, candid, and provocative, Gertrude Besse King points to new "Alliances for the Mind" (Harcourt, Brace). Such thinking as goes into the making of these twenty odd essays and reviews implies a background of study and practice with which few modern critics are endowed. Mrs. King turns the bright shafts of her appraisal with equal facility on Einstein and Bertrand Russell, on Plato and the Moscow Art Theatre. Her critical reviews reveal deep and intelligent reading; her essays, an earnest attempt to rationalize human conduct. One feels that her study, for instance, of "The Servile Mind" is typical of her keen method of approach. This paper deals with the popular mind paralyzed in the phenomenon of war. If the author were living today, she would have a peculiar opportunity to observe popular thinking jelled into the mold of party psychology and mob judgment. What Walter Lippmann, in his excellent introduction to the book, calls her ability to help men find for one another "a friendly conception of the universe", casts upon the most difficult and abstruse subjects a play of kindly humor and original thought. She has her warm admirations and her profound and well based skepticisms. Her book reviews preserve a nice balance between her own mental leanings and those of the author, and, like the papers, assume the form of well rounded and organic pieces of prose. In a brief biographical note we are told that the author had in preparation at the time of her death a volume on philosophy. It is to be regretted that a mind which devoted itself so whole souledly to a sensible rationale of society should have ceased functioning before the completion of what would most surely have been a valuable contribution to present day philosophical research.

Contemporary political history in permanent form, aside from that set down with pathetic pains in the Congressional Record, too often partakes of the Record's flatulent asininity or degenerates into a campaign eulogy of a statesman and his career. It is apparent that the daily press, more than any other agency, influences the vote of the average man and woman. Because of the fact, however, that newspaper policies and party allegiances color and motivate this journalistic influence, it is gratifying to note that what is in effect a political chronicle and citizen's primer has been compiled by a shrewd woman observer in Washington. "Letters from a Senator's Wife" (Appleton) is the attempt of Frances Parkinson Keyes to describe, as graphically as possible, the machinery of government and the personalities of those whose business it is to keep this rather clumsy machinery going. Written quite frankly to entertain as well as instruct, these informal

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papers may seem to the male reader a bit clogged with descriptions of parties, luncheons, dinners, and the hats, gowns, and flowers that graced them. But back of such chatty and trivial detail moves a pretty accurate and unbiased record of the capital's business during the last few years, a record that sets forth the failures as well as the achievements of the makers of government.

There is a feast for someone in "A Thread of English Road" by Charles S. Brooks (Harcourt, Brace). But the feast is not, as might have been expected, for the lover of travel, of new-old discovery, and of the song of the road. Ignoring his more legitimate claims, it beckons lazily, instead, to the dilettante, the wanderer along the byways of whim and fancy. Mr. Brooks went with friends (one of whom has peppered the book with the most entrancing illustrations) on a bicycling tour of southern England. He brought back, instead of a journal of his experiences, a confession of all those delicious dreams and thoughts that were prompted by the things he saw. As a guidebook for those who would follow in his footsteps, it is, of course, frankly impossible. As a bouquet of word and thought, perfumed with a dash of history and of local gossip, it is fragrant and filled with charm.

It is surprising what a number of us are strangers to our own bodies. Many a man is far more familiar with the mechanism of his automobile than he is with his own inner workings. Yet "myself" is a fascinating study for most people, and it is quite essential that we should know enough of our interior geography to keep ourselves in running order. Why, then, this common ignorance? If it exists because most medical books and medical works are too heavy fare for the lay mind's digestion, Dr. Stanley M. Rinehart, in "The Commonsense of Health" (Doran), has performed a public service. He talks from the expert's point of view of body and health and the way to keep fit, but he manages to talk entertainingly and to keep the interest unflagging. His book, indeed, constitutes in itself a tonic that can be recommended to all who want the cobwebs of ignorance and of fear blown away.

When Anatole France discourses "On Life and Letters" (Dodd, Mead) there is a treat in store for a reader. The clear cut style of his essays holds through translation, the lucidity of his thought lends a charm to any subject he discusses. He calls these papers of his "literary tales" and is most animated in stating that they are in no sense critical. However that may be, they contain some of the wisest literary dictums upon French writers that have so far been uttered. De Maupassant, Bourget, Jean Moréas, and a number of minor authors more or less unfamiliar are here given their due first as personalities and then as writers. M. France's cynicism is, as usual, devastating. For instance:

> When biology has been created, that is in a few million years' time, we shall be able to construct a sociology. It will be the work of a great many centuries; after which it will be permissible to create an æsthetic science on solid foundations. But then our planet will be very aged, and near the limits of its destiny, . . . and the last human beings, withdrawn to the depths of the mines, will be less anxious to discuss the essence of the beautiful than to burn the last morsels of coal in the darkness before perishing in the midst of the eternal ice.

Gossip, easy unrestrained writing about persons and social events, is the

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intent of John Beresford in "Gossip of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" (Knopf). He succeeds agreeably. He would have succeeded admirably had he not burdened the book with lengthy paragraphs of historical authority and voluble footnotes. These rob the work of much intimate gossipy charm. The chapters on Charles I, Anne Hyde, and Queen Anne justly and interestingly present these famous, or infamous, personages. The book is worthy of perusal, however, if only for the two remaining chapters on John Donne, seventeenth century jester, and the Holy Mr. Herbert, religious poet, of whom little has been written in contemporary literature. Quotations from Donne, as the following on "humane knoledge", afford much pleasure.

All humane knoledge when it comes to trial,
Is like the Storks meat in a close mouth'd vial;
The Fox look'd, lik'd, lick'd, long'd (but not a pin
The better) he ne'er toucht the meat within.

In a score of papers which treat with urban simplicity Canadian characters, homely phases of life in the Dominion, and reminiscences of his own boyhood, Newton MacTavish has contributed something rare in Canadian literature — the humorous essay. The publication of the essays, under the general title of "Thrown In" (Macmillan Co. of Canada), was frankly undertaken to dispel the existing belief that Canadians have no particular genius for creative humor. Although Mr. MacTavish's humor has a fine, subtle quality, he is sparing in the use of it, and his work stands rather on the merit of his character delineations and analyses. When, in retrospection, he writes of humorous incidents of his childhood, as for example in "The Excursion", he comes closest to realizing his original intention.

"The Life of Olive Schreiner" by her husband, S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner (Little, Brown), is a vast and heavily documented compendium of material about a strangely vivid personality. A view of the complete background of her family life in South Africa is followed by scores of different, personal sketches of the energetic, courageous, idealistic little woman who, despite illness, fought throughout her life against all forms of injustice and intolerance. Much of the book is made up of extracts from letters and journals; it is rather the stuff of which a biography may be made than a finished biography in itself — except for the part, smaller in compass and greater in interest than might be expected, in which the husband tells his own thoughts about the genius who was his wife.

Jules Romains' "Eyeless Sight: A Study of Extra-Retinal Vision and the Paroptic Sense" (Putnam) is a subject concerning which it is quite possible to guess wrongly. So convincing are certain of his many no-less-than-astounding experiments, witnessed and vouched for not alone by such a leader in the fields of imaginative vision as Anatole France, but by an imposing number of Parisian scientists, physicians and surgeons, philosophers and psychologists of high repute! Personally, the skeptic within us argues (very possibly fatuously) that telepathy can explain away a lot of this "world-revolutionizing" discovery. But since Henri Bergson feels it wise to reserve final judgments as to its authenticity, perhaps it will not be foolish for us to do the same.

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