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BOOKS

Just Inside the West Davis Street Entrance

Esther Gould's Book Corner

JUST PARAGRAPHS

Whether other people's choices are important to us or not they are interesting. So it is interesting to note that the critic of the Providence Journal has picked out as the three most worthy books of the present publishing season, "A Mirror for Witches" by Esther Forbes for brilliance, James Stephen's "Etched in Moonlight" for distinction in literary merit, and "The Bonney Family" by Ruth Suckow as the most substantial contribution to American craftsmanship.

How simple these artists are after all! Roland Pertwee, English author and playwright, writes to his publishers that he and Gerald DuMaurier have a hard time getting away from the theatre at night because of the enjoyment of "blazing away at a miniature shooting gallery" erected by the manager in DuMaurier's dressing room. The manager has a "rare gift for inventing targets, one night it is a super dreadnaught which, when hit in certain places, explodes, another night it is the Kyber Pass also riddled with secret magazines."

EXCELLENT LITERATURE

"NORWAY'S BEST STORIES" AND "SWEDEN'S BEST STORIES"

Edited by Hanna Astrup Larsen
W. W. Norton & Co.

The two volumes "Norway's Best Stories" and "Sweden's Best Stories" have a real service to perform and perform it excellently. They are truly as the subtitle and the editor announce, introductions to the fiction of their respective countries.

It is really a rather uncomfortable

thing for most of us to stop and realize how little we know about the literature of these Scandinavian countries. A few of their authors are translated for us and attain great popularity, but they are only a very few chosen more or less by chance out of the many. It is important, too, in order to fully understand their work to know something of their forebears and their contemporaries.

In these two volumes, then, is comprised the history, given by excerpts from representative writers, of the literature of each of the countries for the past seventy years. The editor, Hanna Astrup Larsen, has prefaced each with a clear and comprehensive survey of the whole and a biographical note for each of the authors. It makes them text books of Scandinavian literature as well as much more than that—fascinating collections of stories having a uniformly very high standard.

The style of the respective countries is strikingly alike, the Norwegians all having that fine, stark, powerful feeling for nature, born of their proximity to her austere beauties and great dangers, they have too the deep fatalism and dark superstitious feeling typical of these conditions. The Swedish writers have, many of them, a lighter touch, more romantic in spirit and their superstitions are of a less tragic turn. It is an interesting fact that most of the writers are of peasant stock and most of the subjects are quite naturally taken from that class. The books meet in a very satisfying way the standard set by those writers whom we know of these countries — Bojer, Hamsun, Undset, Lagerlof and the rest.

WHITHER AND WHY?

"GEORGIE MAY"

By Maxwell Bodenheim
Boni & Liveright

It is hard to say what Maxwell Bodenheim intended when he wrote this book "Georgie May." It is evident that he intended something more than just the portrayal of a character, the character of a southern courtesan living in a city's underworld. Evident by the fact that he keeps bobbing up from behind her and making resounding remarks in an impersonal manner like the loud speaker of a hidden radio. "Speak loudly, Georgie May, utter your small plans and plots against the slimy squalor and sordidness of your environs" . . . "Georgie May, your life plays jokes on you and you do not see some of them. This keeps intact your minimum of self



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respect" . . . and "Oh, Georgie May, did they give you rubbish and call it sweet, these kettle-bellied rancidly kind owners of the earth?" etc., etc.

There is a falsity, a sickening sentimentality, which, because it denies itself with harsh sounding words, is not less sentimental, a large generous emptiness. It would take no less a man than Conrad to do this adequately, a man with no less subtlety, sympathy, delicacy of intuition. Mr. Bodenheim hasn't these. He has instead a racy, vivid, sometimes poetical, sometimes strident manner of writing, a gift of sharp characterization, a certain feeling for dramatic situation. But he lacks the touch which would make Georgie May more than a hard-boiled little courtesan, an individual about whom we do not care very much, the touch which would make her a symbolic figure, indicative of things greater than herself as Conrad's figures are.

"Creation by Evolution," Rated Best on Subject

This is what one of the leading religious weeklies says of "Creation by Evolution" edited by Frances Mason.

"What is the best book on evolution for non-technical readers? Within the last three years I have given two different answers to that question. Each answer was, I think, correct at the time when it was given, but neither is correct now. . . .

"Superseding both of these excellent books is this still better one by twenty-six scientists of the highest repute who, each writing of the aspect of the subject which constitutes his own field of special competency, have produced a work that is in the best sense both popular and scientific. Here is a great collection of facts illustrating and cumulatively supporting the evolutionary view of the world—facts about rocks and fossils, the progression of life upon the earth, embryology, the genealogy of plants butterflies, bees, ants, horses, "missing" and connecting links in the evolutionary chain, apes, the lineage of man, the development of the brain, and the evolution of the mind.

"With assurances that nobody's faith is going to be wrecked by it, provided it is a faith which does not totter at the impact of facts, this book may be confidently recommended to all readers who want to know something about both the facts of nature and the evolutionary interpretation of them."—The Christian Century.

St. John Ervine Puts Group of Plays in Book

There is a new volume of "Four One-Act Plays" by St. John Ervine. "The Magnanimous Lover" is a scathing study of canting self-righteousness, and in "Progress" a mother who lost her son in the war refuses to let her brother, the scientist, live to sell his new explosive to the government. "When Ole George Comes to Tea" presents a humorously tender scene in the life of a young married couple, and "She Was No Lady" shows how the wife of the newly knighted Sir Alfred Pickles schemes to return to the scrubbing brush of her humbler days.

It is impossible to read St. John Ervine without an intense realization of his deep humanity and compassion, and yet there is so much humor in his work that it is never depressing.

"THE TOWER"

"Mr. Yeats improves poetically as he grows older," writes Virginia Woolf in the New York Herald-Tribune; "The Tower" contains his best, deepest, and most imaginative work."

And Jane Judge writes, in the Savannah News: "Lovers of Yeats' earlier poetry will prize this admirably printed little volume—the variety and charm of its music and the sensitive handling of words and phrases in which he is so adept."