

In the SEPTEMBER issue of

THE AMERICAN MERCURY

BETWEEN WORLDS *James Branch Cabell*
After a long and curious conversation the Bishop dutifully enters the Pearly Gates. Mr. Cabell writes with delicious and precious irony.

DEATH IN THE WOODS *Sherwood Anderson*
With Mid-America as a background, Sherwood Anderson tells a story as moving and as colorful as any in "Winesburg, Ohio."

DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP *Edgar Lee Masters*
Mr. Masters definitely established himself as an authentic American poet with his "SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY." "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP" is worthy of being classed with the best of Mr. Masters's work.

GUATEMALA *William McFee*
From his wide and varied experiences Mr. McFee draws a vivid picture of that little-known country in Central America.

NATHALIA FROM BROOKLYN *Nunnally Johnson*
Mr. Johnson was in a favorable position to observe all the fuss and furor of the Crane episode, still memorable to the readers of the public prints. Mr. Johnson writes intimately of Nathalia, her parents, and her self-constituted "investigators."

IOWA *By Ruth Suckow*
Literary Ladies—ubiquitous everywhere,—but extremely virulent in *Ioway*. Miss Suckow, author of *THE ODYSSEY OF A NICE GIRL* relates a sad tale of a rift in the ranks of Iowan ladies—some preferring to cultivate their minds, others more fruitfully the soil.

STATISTICS SHOW *By Royce B. Howes*
"Figures Never Lie"—but the ingenuity of our statistic-compilers can put to naught the most firmly established aphorism. Royce B. Howes shows how *Figures Fib* in a clever amusing article.

besides articles by
JOHN McLURE, DUNCAN AIKMAN
articles on
ABRAHAM CAHAN, WILLIAM JAMES

MORE

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The New Books Fiction

(Continued from page 58)

of this particular book is Ireland, which its authors know intimately—or which Mr. Ross knew before his death, since the actual execution of the novel is Mrs. Somerville's—and its chief characters the Prendeville family, owners of the Big House. Once important, they have fallen very much lower in the world through a succession of handsome and profligate scions who squandered money, married far beneath them, sowed a crop of illegitimate offspring, and generally seized the day. It is of Kit, the last of the house, that the story chiefly treats; and after covering a hundred and fifty years in a few chapters, it concentrates the remainder of the narrative on the events of a few months in the year 1912.

Kit at twenty-four, living with a very old father and a sixty-year-old half-sister, is true to his line. He falls in love with the right girl just a little too late, and though his fortunes, and those of the house, bid fair for awhile to go favorably, in the end his courtship fails and the great house is sold. It is a tribute to the quality of the book that one feels a very real and moving pang when Inver is sold away, and the concise, ironic ending of the novel is in keeping with that quality. "The Big House at Inver," has, to a moderate degree, almost everything to recommend it. It is interesting and lifelike, it has a touch of charm and of pathos, it is more than usually well-written, freaked with touches of humor and wit, clearly and sympathetically peopled, and without a shade of over-emphasis quietly Irish in spirit. The story proceeds always along surfaces, never for an instant sounding depths or achieving significance, and is a very quiet story to boot, without moments of excitement or intensity; yet it is precisely as a story that it makes its appeal.

Government

THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY. By LOUISE OVERACKER. Macmillan. 1926.

Following the Roosevelt-Taft and Wilson-Clark Presidential primaries of 1912, it looked as if the new method of selecting delegates to national conventions and controlling their votes might become general. President Wilson in his first message to a regular session of Congress rather rashly stated that the subject, he hoped, could be handled promptly and without serious controversy. But the difficulties in the way of a national law governing primary elections are not easy to overcome. In addition, the States themselves have become critical of the device. Nevertheless, the Presidential primary is an important part of our nominating machinery and a book presenting the phenomena it has shown is to be welcomed.

All the factors entering into the Presidential primary are set forth in this volume, from such fundamental matters as control of the action of the delegates, expense, and the question of the open or the closed primary down to details like the form of the ballot. The author, although apparently favoring the Presidential primary, frankly admits that the difficulty of meeting all the problems it creates is "well-nigh insurmountable." To bind a delegate absolutely or to try to get rid of the convention by having a direct popular vote on candidates might cause no complications if a simple plurality were allowed to determine the choice, but this procedure is recognized as unwise. In some way a majority of the party ought to be brought into agreement upon its candidates. This a convention can do. The problem centers around the degree of control—not too rigid, not too loose—of the convention. The value of this book would be increased by connected accounts of the Presidential primary campaigns from 1912 to 1924, but it is a very useful treatise as it stands.

Poetry

GOING-TO-THE-STAR. By VACHEL LINDSAY. Appleton. 1926. \$2.

This is far less finished and vital work than we had a right to expect from Vachel Lindsay. Again, as in "Going-to-the-Sun," the introduction and rhymes are the result of a tramping trip. There is a careless spontaneity to these and to the drawings and hieroglyphs. This is the notebook of an artist, full of rough sketches for poems, of casual pretty reflections, of clever marginal scrawls inspired by a Short Egyptian Grammar. It is a question whether such a notebook should have been put forth as a volume in itself. The work in verse is considerably below Lindsay's best. The material

gathered together is in *disiecta membra poeta*.

Spontaneity has ever been one of Lindsay's great charms as a poet, and the torrential quality of his poetic expression carried one's attention over bad lines and crabbed metrics as a cataract carries a leaf over the rocks just below the surface. But when the torrent ceases from spate the rough and bald nature of the stream bed is obtrusive. Occasional delicate and elusive beauties in the poems here present cannot reconcile one to awkward repetitions and banalities, to childishness frequently without the old saving grace, to prosy tedium in many verses.

Few poets in America have made such a vital and lasting contribution to native poetry as has Lindsay. Therefore we are but all too human in lamenting any apparent diminution of his powers. But we believe it to be an interim. We believe he is tentatively tuning up between acts, and that a new music will succeed.

Travel

ON THE MANDARIN ROAD. ROLAND DORGELES. Century. 1926. \$3.

When an American man of letters rents a Florentine villa for a season the result is quite apt to be a "travel book." When an English gentlewoman of literary tastes spends her first winter in Morocco the result is apt to be another "travel book." But when a French *littérateur* slowly and deliberately assimilates the memories and impressions of life in Indo-China, the result is certain to be more than a "travel book."

In this respect Roland Dorgelès's "On the Mandarin Road" is in no way a disappointment. Shades of Loti and Renan; delicate pastels of jade rice-fields, of shining white marshes, of red roads underneath the palms; sharply etched pictures of slant-eyed coolies toiling under burning suns, of buffaloes driven by youngsters stretched out on their backs, of bare-breasted women singing as they crush their rice; silhouettes of crowded market-places, of dancing girls and temple bells—Dorgelès gives us the myriad lights and deep shadows of unknown Asia, the pungent atmosphere of the edge of the jungle, the life and color and pageantry bordering "on the Mandarin Road."

Yet this is not the exotic Orient of the "Arabian Nights" or the magic mystery of forgotten fairy tales. Charlie Chaplin has invaded the sacred precincts of Confucius, the Ford car has come like a swarm of gnats in the night, and Civilization stalks abroad in the raiment of New York and Paris. The Mandarin Road is a highway of strange contrasts which assault the senses and baffle the imagination. Progress or decadence? The land of fever and heavy rains is traversed by roads and teelgraph lines, and Angkor is no longer hidden away, inaccessible in the heart of its forests. Fathers and sons are poles apart; the one is afraid of the dragon, the other of the policeman.

"On the Mandarin Road" is a study in contrasts, the old pitted against the new, and fast losing ground. While embracing the old, Dorgelès does not discredit the new. "Our Occidental customs introduced into Indo-China have not destroyed the picturesque. They have merely transformed it." The fact, he maintains, that a Chinaman covers his microscopic head with a derby that is much too big for him does not change his nationality. He remains Chinese just the same, uniquely, superbly Chinese.

The book is evidently not built upon a preconceived plan. It appears to be without form and the chapters do not follow consecutively. The method is casual and the style informal, even in translation, at times languorous, at times moving at an astonishing tempo. Yet it should not be otherwise. Brilliant pictures, dusky vignettes, fleeting impressions, comments, conjectures, hopes, and regrets, are delightfully mingled, just as all things are delightfully mingled—in the East.

ENCHANTED TRAILS OF GLACIER PARK. By AGNES C. LAUT. McBride. 1926. \$3.

The wild life and scenic beauty of "America's Switzerland" are here described with authority and appreciation by one who knows the region intimately. Besides her enlightening comment on the forestry, mountains, lakes, birds, and animals of the Park, the author discusses entertainingly its earlier history and that of its original inhabitants, the meagrely surviving Blackfoot Indians. The book is handsomely illustrated, and contains maps, and a valuably informing essay on "The Old Oregon Trail." It should be heartily commended to prospective tourists of this magnificent playground.

The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review*

A BALANCED RATION

SHOW-BOAT. By *Edna Ferber*
(Doubleday, Page).

A MIRROR TO FRANCE. By *Ford Madox Ford* (A. & C. Boni).

MY MUSICAL LIFE. By *Walter Damrosch* (Scribners).

P. K. J., Hollywood, Cal., asks several questions about handbooks on English words and idioms.

A DICTIONARY of Modern English Usage," by H. W. Fowler (Oxford University Press), answers all the questions thus compressed, settles countless disputes, and excites any number of healthful and fruitful discussions. Within five minutes of opening it, someone must be found to whom something must be read, the reading attended by alarms and excursions. Whether it be the spelling of lich-gate or the pronunciation of lichen, or the pitfalls laid by the word "what" for "those who think they can write well enough without stopping to learn grammar," or whether the eye, caught by "Swapping Horses," "Wardour Street," or "Love of the Long Word," lingers on what prove to be discussions of general principles, on you go, sending up rockets beginning "Listen to this. . ." The paragraph on "Superfluous Words" starts a vigorous pruning upon one's vocabulary, and since the book appeared, blue pencils have been drawn through at least a thousand very's. It is a companion to the "Concise Oxford Dictionary," which I see is recommended by the *London Quarterly Review*, on the jacket of "Modern Usage" itself, as "more and more indispensable."

S. D., Moscow, Soviet Russia, asks what American authors of fiction are in a position to write with authority about negroes.

"PORGY," by Du Bose Heyward (Doran), is a poet's novel, deep and searching the heart, strangely and richly beautiful. "The Fire in the Flint," by Walter White (Knopf), is a burning problem novel. "Green Thursday," by Julia Peterkin (Knopf), a set of twelve remarkable short stories. T. S. Stribling's "Birthright" (Century), the first widely-discussed novel by the author of "Teefallow" (Doubleday, Page), is a document of social transition, quietly stating the tragedy of the forerunner. Include in the list Irvin Cobb's "J. Poindexter, Colored" (Doran), and notice, in the novels of Booth Tarkington, the extraordinary reality of the Negro characters, however small a part they take in the action—Herman and Verma, for instance, in the "Penrod" stories (Doubleday, Page). The stories of Hugh Wiley (Knopf) and of Octavus Roy Cohen (Dodd, Mead), concern themselves with the comic side of life in Negro settlements in large cities, as it appears to white observers: they are vivacious entertainments rather than sociological documents. For this subject in general, get "The New Negro," lately published by Albert & Charles Boni; for information on earlier writings by Negroes, Benjamin Brawley's "The Negro in Art and Literature in the United States" (Duffield), and Beatrice Morton's "Negro Poetry in America" (Stratford). Of the works of Burghardt Du Bois, the one I would choose for this collection would be the vibrant presentation of an awakening race, "Darkwater" (Harcourt, Brace). Herbert Seligman's "The Negro Faces America" (Harper) is a study of progress.

Let this student add to his equipment "The Book of American Negro Spirituals" (Viking Press), edited by James Weldon Johnson; "Mellows," a collection of work-songs from Louisiana (A. & C. Boni), and "Blues," an anthology lately published by the same house. Folk-music tells more than it says: the novel and the textbook, however much they mean to say, sometimes choke on words.

S. G. M., Berkeley, Cal., is looking for a history of the Paisley shawl, its patterns, origin, places of manufacture, etc.

I HAVE searched not a few large general collections and several special libraries, and find nothing save a pamphlet issued by the Cincinnati Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio, called "Cashmere Shawls." There is a great deal to be found, by special research, about patterns in weaving, but I can find no book especially about shawl patterns.

B. L. M., Kirksville, Mo., and C. B. M., Lincoln, Ill., ask for suggestions toward the choice of fiction suitable for reviews by reading clubs.

AS I begin this selection, which must be made some time before it can be printed, I must remind these book committees that the wave of Fall fiction is only just gathering, and that there will be new novels that I am now eagerly waiting to read. May Sinclair's "Far End" (Macmillan) will no doubt be published by the time this is printed, and Galsworthy's "The Silver Spoon" (Scribner) is going on with the Forsytes, but Rose Macaulay's new novel is not yet at hand, and that seems to be, from advance accounts, one to be on this list. H. G. Wells is at work on a huge one, "William Clissold," of which but the preface or apologia has yet seen the light: Arnold Bennett is to deal with a character based, it is rumored, upon Lord Beaverbrook; the author of "Lolly Willows" has a novel on the way and anything she may write is worth waiting for. Frank Swinnerton's new novel is nearly ready, and—contrary to report—it will not be a sequel to "The Elder Sister." Mr. Swinnerton puts his sequels into his books, to be found by the discerning eye.

Of the new novels within my reach as I write, I place "Adam's Breed" (Doubleday, Page), at the head of the list. It is by Radclyffe Hall, a woman young in years but rich in understanding, capable of creating characters in the round, "real people," as we say when we mean people in books whose hearts we can read as well as their faces. The hero is an Italian waiter in a Soho restaurant, and the book, which takes the reader through every step in the providing, cooking, and serving of luxurious food to the luxurious, might have been written upon the text that man may not live by bread alone. It is a book to read slowly, forcing the reader to lay it down and meditate and calling him to take it up and go on reading.

"Precious Bane," by Mary Webb (Dutton), has been chosen by two French prize committees as the best novel of the year by an Englishwoman: it should be on our reading lists, and I hope it may turn interested readers to her earlier novels as well. "Man Trap," by Sinclair Lewis (Harcourt, Brace), interests me partly by the exercise it affords in identifying, in his own earlier novels, the sources of its various characters and situations; partly by the speed and sweep of the action. "Beau Geste" has been followed by "Beau Sabreur" (Stokes), in which Percival Christopher Wren swoops down once more out of the clouds of romance. Ben Ames Williams's "The Silver Forest" (Dutton) comes just in time for me to include it; Warwick Deeping's "Sorrell and Son" (Knopf) has been with us long enough to win favor with those who believe that sympathy between father and son deserves a larger share in fiction than it has lately received. Harvey O'Higgins's "Clara Barron" (Harper) and Storm Jameson's "Three Kingdoms" (Knopf) are about what we used to call "new women," a perennial subject for club discussion. I am glad to see that one of the clubs lately applying for advice on review books had already begun its list with C. E. Montague's "Rough Justice" (Doubleday, Page); this is a war book with a difference. Susan Ertz's "After Noon" (Appleton) I have already offered to club reviewers; it presents problems that would daunt the young but that middle-age has earned the power to resolve. If the book to be reviewed is to be concerned with travel, or with conditions in far-off countries, there is a new novel, "But in Our Lives" (Appleton), by the famous explorer Sir Francis Younghusband, which gives a vivid and convincing view of English life in India, and J. C. Snaith's new novel, "What Is to Be" (Appleton) goes into the Balkans, where a tangle of intrigues of court and throne are resolved by destiny with the help of an attractive Englishman. Admirers of Thomas Burke will find in his new "East of the Mansion House" (Doran) much of the power, intensity, color, of "Limehouse Nights" and "The Wind and the Rain."

"Mape," by André Maurois (Appleton), is rather biography than fiction, but no list compiled for women's reading, in or out of clubs, should omit it. It is a book to own, even improving with time. Nor should a woman's club leave out "Memoirs of Halide Edib" (Century), which is history in the making.



More Argosies of Literary News

IT'S curious how words suffer abuse in the course of time. Take "gossip," for instance. We started to use it just now in connection with our Reader's Guide and were suddenly halted by the thought that some misguided soul might apply it in its derogatory sense instead of in its archaic meaning of a "friendly acquaintance."

We had intended to use it because we wanted to tell you that our good "gossip," Mrs. Becker, was coming back from England full of delightful reminiscences of the celebrities with whom her stay in London had brought her in contact. There was Christopher Robin, to begin with the youngest, who lives in a golden-walled nursery with the most human of Teddy-bears for a companion; there was Frank Swinnerton, domiciled in a tile-roofed cottage in Surrey, with a garden blazing with flowers stretching away from his study windows; there was the "audacious Miss King-Hall, who hoaxed the world by 'The Dairy of a Young Lady of Fashion,' and who is nineteen and looks sixteen, and about whom everything from her curly crop to her adolescent elbows quivers with glee at her adventure;" there was Silvia Townsend Warner, "who lives alone, guarded by a mysterious chow, smoke-black and as silent as all London dogs;" there was—

There's no use going further. We've reached the end of our space, and Mrs. Becker's recollections would fill many columns. You will be interested in her sprightly characterizations—there's a long instalment of them coming next week in place of usual answers to requests for information. Perhaps some friend of yours would enjoy them also. If you think of anyone who would, won't you put his name and address on the coupon below? That might introduce *The Saturday Review* to a new subscriber.

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By *Herbert Allen Giles*

Professor of Chinese in the University of Cambridge

Professor Giles lived in China for many years and this book reflects his systematic investigation of the Chinese language, literature, history and characteristics.

Pp. ix + 229. \$2.50

THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF CHINA

By *Friedrich Hirth*

Emeritus Professor of Chinese in Columbia University

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The Invention of Printing in China and Its Spread Westward

By *Thomas F. Carter*

Late Assistant Professor of Chinese in Columbia University

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by *Clara Sharpe Hough*

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At bookstores \$2.00

CENTURY—Enduring Books

FLORIDA. By *Kenneth L. Roberts*.

Harper and Brothers. 1925. \$2.50.

"Florida" is a journal of the year 1925-26, an epic of the Southern Gold Rush. No aspect of the phenomenon is left untouched. Furthermore, Mr. Roberts writes of this Pullman-car pilgrimage with all the verve and vigor that characterized his earlier writing, and those who are on their way to Florida will do well to slip it into an already over-crowded suit-case. Florida fever and Florida fireworks, Florida diversions and Florida occupations, all come in for their own, and the age-old Everglades have their say as surely as the more lately discovered Coral Gables, Hollywood, and Boca Raton.

Fortunate indeed for Florida to have had its somewhat belated debut chronicled by so adept a reporter. Mr. Roberts had a good time at the party and there is no trace of a morning-after effect in his enthusiastic account. "Florida" is as interesting to read in retrospect as in anticipation, and if one has no thoughts of a trip South, the book is recommended as an excellent substitute. Humor lights Mr. Roberts' pages, but it does not approach the facetious nor obscure the information that is tactfully interwoven.