

RECENT BOOKS IN BRIEF REVIEW

MARIA CHAPDELAINÉ", a tale of the Lake St. John country, by Louis Hémon (Macmillan), is the sort of book that restores our faith in modern literature. It is a story of the French Canadian people, the pioneers of the present, who are slowly and painfully making farmland out of forests, a story especially about the Chapdelaine family in their little house in the woods, miles from any neighbor. They are rugged men and patient women, elemental in their emotions and childlike in their faith. The translation from the French preserves a poetic simplicity of style, something in the spirit of a Millet etching. It is one of the fine things of the year.

One need not be a regular subscriber at the Aquarium to enjoy "Tortoises" by D. H. Lawrence (Seltzer). The subject is not treated biologically but humanly, very humanly. In a half-dozen free verse lyrics, Mr. Lawrence philosophizes on the significance of this species, and to the misguided individuals who never before realized their importance, the volume will be a revelation. It is not hard to trace his analogies and the verses are replete with a subtle satire that is thoroughly enjoyable. By all means, consider the tortoise.

Because everything that John Drinkwater does is of interest, "Cotswold Characters" (Yale) cannot be overlooked. It is another of those slender little volumes—one teaspoonful of reading—that seem to be popular with the publishers lately. It contains five short but skilful character sketches,

portraits of English country people of an ancient order quite unknown to us. It is clear and concise, kindly and humorous—an example of Drinkwater's best prose style.

Although A. P. Herbert is an Englishman, the title of his latest book, "Little Rays of Moonshine" (Knopf), will have a singular appeal to his American audience, and it quite fulfils the implied promise. He here presents a series of short humorous sketches, each one of which has enough kick in it to be pleasantly stimulating. It is English humor at its best, most of it from "Punch", and all of it apt to leave one in a thoroughly happy frame of mind.

The idolaters of Dickens have been given another complementary volume in B. W. Matz's "The Inns and Taverns of 'Pickwick'" (Scribner). Here is an illustrated collection of descriptive bits regarding those spots visited by the adventuring Pickwickians, in which Mr. Matz shows the buildings as they were and are and relates such anecdotes as have been connected with them since the days of the man who gave them fame.

Elizabeth Bibesco should regret that she will be known by many as the daughter of Margot Asquith, and by others as Princess Bibesco. She requires no support from her mother's reputation, and she has no need of the spurious fame accruing to a writing princess. "I Have Only Myself to Blame" (Doran) has individuality enough to stand by itself. This col-

lection of short stories shows the writer's appreciation of the value of not ending the narrative. Each story is an episode, generally taken from a married life, which, while complete in itself, leaves to the reader the privilege—almost the necessity—of finishing the tale. They are exquisitely done things, sometimes perhaps too ostentatiously decorated with description, and occasionally lacking a nicety in the choice of words, but, for all that, excellent studies. They tantalize because they insist on continuing after the finis mark; they irritate because they are so short; but most of all they charm because they are so real.

Edgar Lee Masters devotes more than half of "The Open Sea" (Macmillan) to a psychological exploration into the mind of Lincoln's assassin to show that behind that murder there was the same decision which impelled Brutus to join in the killing of Cæsar. Almost a score of poems are devoted to this. Before now Masters has shown his admiration for Lincoln, and even here it manifests itself time and again. Because of this admiration, the cold scientific treatment of the historic incident brings a doubt as to the poet's sincerity. He seems to have a desire to surprise and shock. The same tendency is apparent in those verses which tell the other side of New Testament miracles—the business failure of the baker and fishmonger when the multitude was fed, is one of them. Delightful as these poems are, one feels that Masters did write them to jolt the orthodox. But about the "Monody on the Death of William Marion Reedy" there can be no doubt. In this there is sincere expression, such as has brought the worshipers to Masters's feet. The poet, for the most part, seems almost a stranger in this

book, which may, after all, be but an indication of versatility.

After a rambling and confused introduction, Ernst von Wildenbruch does some remarkably fine work in "Envy" (Four Seas). It is not reminiscent of childhood, this story of the two little brothers, it is a recreation of it. The reader too feels the outside world dimly unimportant for the moment, and the intensity and passion, the love and cruelty of children to be the realities. The vividness of its style gives it an Ancient Mariner sort of fascination, and the translation from the German is so well done that one is not conscious of its being a translation at all.

The Bookfellows have published an anthology called "The Poet's Pack", which is meant to represent the best work of its members. The material was assembled by a contest to which more than a thousand poems were submitted. These were pruned down to one hundred and might easily have been made even less. There are few familiar names among the contributors but some promising work from new writers—perhaps a half-dozen poems altogether that make the collection worth while.

With a razored intellectual scalpel, Remy de Gourmont operates on modern thought to remove the growths which hamper clear reasoning. Convention—as a general term, not relating specifically to sex—is the matter through which the incision is made to reach the cancer. Nor, in "Decadence and Other Essays on the Culture of Ideas", translated by William Aspenwall Bradley (Harcourt, Brace), is there any anæsthetic administered to lessen the pain. For this reason, the