

# The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BLACKER

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

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**BEHAVIOR OF THE LOWER ORGANISMS**

By H. S. Jennings

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**A BALANCED RATION FOR WEEK-END READING**

STACEY. By ALEXANDER BLACK. (Bobbs-Merrill).

SO MUCH VELVET. By F. P. A. (Doubleday, Page).

HENRY THOREAU. By LEON BAZALGETTE (Harcourt, Brace).

J. W. W., *Bemidji, Minn.*, asks if there is available anywhere a detailed map or maps of the Mississippi River from the source, and if there is any book that gives a detailed, accurate account of a trip in either canoe or rowboat down the Mississippi from the source to, say, St. Louis.

AS for maps, the Mississippi River Commission issues a series of charts, twenty-eight covering the entire course of the river, prices fixed to cover cost of paper and printing. The office of the Commission is in St. Louis, but travellers from this section can get them, as they usually get their Geodetic Survey topographical maps so useful for walking trips, from C. S. Hammond, of Church Street, New York. These river charts are very complete in detail, giving the delineation of the shores accurately as well as furnishing soundings and other matters of interest to canoeists.

As for books, very little seems to have been written in recent years concerning this phase of travel in this particular region. Even the American Geographical Society, to which I appealed when I could find nothing that seemed to be what this reader needed, could tell me only of "Down the Great River," by Willard Glazier (Philadelphia, 1887), which relates a trip made in a canoe from Lake Itasca in 1881, and three magazine articles, of which C. K. Kitchener's "Drifting Down the Mississippi" is recent, appearing in *Outing*, May, 1922; "Rowing Down the Mississippi," *Outing*, November, 1913, and "A Canoe Trip on the Upper Mississippi River," by C. Lanman, *Magazine of History*, March-April, 1915, are the others.

D. A. W., *Yokohama, Japan*, asks if the series of novels on French industries, by Pierre Hamp, mentioned in the SATURDAY REVIEW of November 8, includes one on the silk industry.

WITH some trepidation, for I have read nothing of Pierre Hamp's since his two-story monument to the perfumery trade, "Le Cantique des Cantiques," which appeared in 1922, I say that he had no silk book in this powerful and surprising series—or rather group of novels. But I hope that D. A. W., and others who are willing to stand enlightenment on French methods and mentality, will give themselves the ex-

perience of reading "Marée Fraiche" and getting new light on fish markets, or "Vin de Champagne."

M. E. H., *Hollywood, Cal.*, is preparing a paper on "Shakespeare's London."

THERE are twelve references to Shakespeare's city in Helen Henderson's "A Loiterer in London" (Doran), which is one of the latest additions to the large and ever-enlarging literature of London, and has excellent pictures. In Ashley Thorndike's "Shakespeare's Theatre" (Macmillan) there is much that would make such a paper valuable. But the treasure-house for such study, a library in two large volumes, is "Shakespeare's England," issued by the Oxford University Press in commemoration of the Tercentenary. This has articles by specialists on every phase of its subject, economic, aesthetic, spiritual, and sociological. Percy Boynton's "London in English Literature" (University of Chicago) shows the part the city has taken in all the great literary periods of England; another book of this kind, interesting to travellers, is St. John Adecock's "Famous Houses and Literary Shrines" (Dutton). If this inquirer ever has the chance to hear W. W. Ellsworth (formerly of the Century Company, and author of "A Golden Age of Authors"—Houghton Mifflin—) give his lecture on "Shakespeare's London," illustrated with rare antiquarian prints and reconstructions, she will get more than from any book. I don't know when I have so enjoyed an address on a literary subject.

H. H. T., *Williamsburg, Ky.*, asks where to find the recitation, "Lasca," information that he remembers I gave a reader some years ago.

AT that time, I recall, I located it in Mrs. James Brown Potter's "My Recitations" (Lippincott) because it was from this collection, in the year of its appearance, that I heard Frank Hilliard read the piece for the first time; the book is still in print. In this Age of Innocence, "Lasca" was on the edge of the possible for drawing-room recitations, "Ostler Joe" being just over the edge. But meantime a new volume and a vast one has been added to the arsenal of drawing-room ammunition, and "Lasca" is in it; this is Pertwee's "Reciters' Treasury of Verse" (Dutton). This book is one of the best collections of poems that can be effectively read or recited to audiences; its range is wide, and its standards high.

**YOU ARE A WRITER.** Don't you ever need help in marketing your work? I am a literary adviser. For years I read for Macmillan, then for Doran, and then I became consulting specialist to them and to Holt, Stokes, Lippincott, and others, for most of whom I have also done expert editing, helping authors to make their work saleable. Send for my circular. I am closely in touch with the market for books, short stories, articles and verses, and I have a special department for plays and motion pictures. The Writers' Workshop, Inc. 135 East 58th Street New York City

*Matilde Neil*

# Matilda

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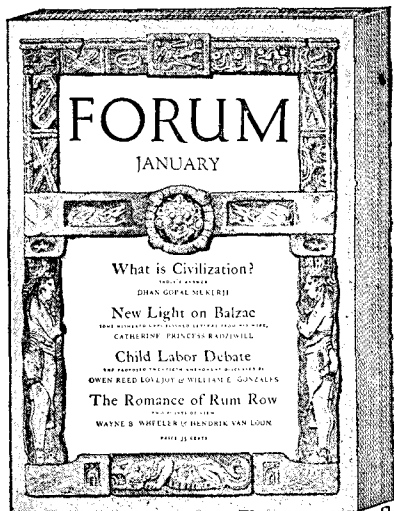
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# Points of View

## From Main Street

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

A casual glance over the present list of book reviews and magazines of the better class featuring book-reviewing departments often tempts one to make the statement that the field is overcrowded. In fact, the field is overcrowded commercially, but there has long been felt, by the book-lovers of Main Street, the need of an honest, dependable review. This long-felt want *The Saturday Review* is filling.

There are not, in round numbers, so many readers of good books in the small towns as there are in the large ones, but the ratio of sincere book-lovers is as great in the villages as in the cities, using their respective populations as a basis for comparison, and the number of villages far surpasses the number of cities. The lovers of good books in the cities can personally select their books from the bookshops, sampling them before purchasing, but the buyers of good books who live on Main Street (not so unfortunately as an urban reader of Sinclair Lewis might be led to believe, for there are compensations!) must order them sight unseen. As there are so many new editions brought out each month, the purchaser of books in the small town must rely entirely upon the reviews to make his selections. When one resorts to this method, he soon learns whether or not the reviews printed in the different periodicals are reliable.

We on Main Street, therefore, greet the *Saturday Review* with great rejoicing. We have more leisure for reading than the urbanites (this being one of the compensations, provided we can secure the right kind of books) and, as circulating libraries are not so accessible, we spend more money for books. In the town in which I live it is necessary to purchase all of the books we read in order to secure the kind of books we want to read. There is a Carnegie Library in our town, but the book fund is never adequate and is invariably exhausted by the demands of the masses for popular fiction. For those who would rather rest their eyes and commune with their thoughts than waste their eyesight and tempers on Messrs. Wright, Chambers, McCutcheon, *et al*, it is necessary to spend their "hard-earned cash" and build up a library of their own in order to secure the kind of books that make their isolation a blessing. Further, the Main Street reader (and purchaser) of worth-while books is never the rich citizen (nor one, may I add, that belongs to literary clubs). Wealth and good taste in literature, at least in the small towns, seldom go hand in hand. The man in the villages who spends his money for better books has (as a rule) only a limited amount to allot to this pleasure, and every dollar must be made to count. When once bitten by an insincere and inaccurate review, he is twice shy.

It is not only the book reviews that the book-lover of Main Street reads. He, also, reads the reviews of the Broadway premières of plays. Greatly to his joy, publication of the drama has received a tremendous impetus during the past two years. Personally, I have a system all my own (or, at least, I think it is) for enjoying the new plays at a distance of a thousand miles. I collect the reviews of worthwhile plays as they appear and, later, when a play I have liked when reviewed, appears in book-form, I acquire the volume. After reading the play in book-form, I re-read the reviews and, combining the two, create a creditable fireside theatre. In this way, I often learn more about the plays and can better discuss them than the average play-goer.

My favorite reviewers of the plays are Alexander Woollcott, George Jean Nathan and Gordon Whyte. Three more dissimilar critics can hardly be thought of in the same inspirational flash, but a composite résumé of the reviews of each on a certain play will give one a marvelous insight into what actually happened on the stage the night of the première. The drollery of Woollcott, the trenchant downrightness of Nathan and the plot descriptions of Whyte give one a very good idea of the routine of the performance. Nathan is, doubtless, the ablest; Woollcott, the cleverest, and Whyte the most conventional, but no one critic could possess all of these qualities, equally balanced, and the combination of the three makes very satisfactory reading, even when they are at variance (as they frequently are). The mellow reminiscences of Woollcott (agreeably displayed each week in his syndicated "Reviewing Stand"

and in his recent volume, "Enchanted Aisles"), and the analytical bludgeoning of Nathan (wielded monthly in *The American Mercury*) make one feel their dependableness, and, of all the qualities that appeal to the Main Streetite, dependableness is the greatest.

Coming back to the books themselves (we haven't been far away as printed dramas are books), it is very discouraging for a resident of Main Street of slight means and large literary tastes to be inveigled by a highly-tinted and eulogistic review into buying a modern fictional effusion only to find the best part about it is the decorative blurb. The Main Streetite likes to keep abreast of the times, but, if the modern books are not worthy of the expenditure of his time and money, he is not at all reluctant to dip into the literary treasures of the past with the assistance of a competent guide. This sort of guide (and friend, too, though unknown) was Maurice Francis Egan in his "Confessions of a Book-Lover." The first chapter was the experience of Everybody with literary tastes, and the last chapters were mines of treasures for adult book-lovers, especially in small towns. It was alone worth reading Egan's book to make the acquaintance of Charles S. Brooks's "Hints to Pilgrims" and to discover the author's fine tribute to Mr. H. L. Mencken, who has long been a pillar of sincere reviewing to the readers of the hinterland.

There are many lovers of good books on Main Street, but the further expansion of their literary tastes depends upon an adequate guiding hand. This guiding hand you are now extending to them, as are a limited number of other magazines in a more restricted manner, but your review is more helpful because it devotes itself entirely to this need. There can be no greater fury in the heart of the proverbial woman scorned than that which possesses a misguided book-lover, but, on the other hand, no one is more grateful than this same book-lover when led to the stall where good books abound.

SIMEON L. SITES

McAlester, Oklahoma.

## "Lottery" Again

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:  
SIR:

In the issue of November 22nd, 1924, Mr. Elmer Davis dissects the story of Mr. Woodward called "Lottery." I am not flying to the defence of the author in replying, obliquely, to Mr. Davis. Neither shall I try to pick Mr. Davis to pieces. I prefer to discuss the chronic inability of critics to put themselves in the place of the author who is trying to do something different, no matter how short he may fall of his aspiration. When an author has tackled a new theme in a new way, as did Lewis in "Main Street," he usually stirs up a tremendous pother not unlike the scaring of a rockful of sea-gulls. Ninety-nine people out of every hundred who bought "Main Street" read into it or out of it only what they wanted to. When Wells's "Outline of History" appeared, everyone I came in touch with had looked up the index for the subject he was familiar with and judged the book from the manner in which his specialty was handled. In the case of "Lottery" or "Bunk," the advertising writer turns his nose up at it, the business man blushes and says it isn't true, and all the others who live by words flock to their defense and say it isn't literature.

Now, Mr. Woodward, as one looks at him objectively, so to speak, is not a youngster trying to be clever. Whatever he may be inside, outwardly he might pass for a Tammany ward-heeler. Since we have celebrated our Daisy Ashfords and our youthful poets, let's have a good word to say for our practical man who at fifty or thereabouts suddenly realizes that he has been kidding himself all along, and stops it. Mr. Woodward in middle life seemed faced with the alternative of rotary or literature, and, being a practical man, he chose literature. If he has been lucky it is not because he took a chance. There was nothing else for a disillusioned business man to do. And now as a practical man he is utilizing the by-products of his business experience. To turn upon him and call him a "left winger" seems to me to lay one's self open to the charge of lack of clear reasoning. So long as he remained in the bunk game of advertising, he was a right-winger. But now that he is trying to sell some of his right-wing experience he becomes a suspicious character. Mr. Davis prides himself in at least one vital discovery of error in the thought of "Lottery." "There seems

to be a remnant of inextinguishable pride in the old business which leads him to give competent publicity a good deal of the credit for Garrison's success," says Davis. Much as to say that so important an element of business success can hardly be placed in the category of chance. But are we not told by the all-wise publicity managers of publishing houses that no amount of advertising will sell a book unless the book takes of its own accord? In other words, it was merely Jerry Garrison's good luck that by chance he obtained so popular a prize as the Garrison Holdfast Buttons, else not all the publicity in the world would have disposed of them. The element of chance behind brilliant advertising is in discovering something like Spearmint, or cars that make enough noise to attract one's neighbor's attention. And in inventing the Garrison Holdfast Button, Woodward took all the uncertainty out of the sale of his novel.

I am not defending Mr. Woodward, but I wonder if the Elmer Davises of Fielding's time didn't feel the same way about "The Historical Register." As satirical fantasies both "Bunk" and "Lottery" treat a phase of American life lightly, but accurately, and give us a chance to see ourselves as an American sees us, and we can well forgive him if he does not employ the cut and dried technique of the novelist.

SYDNEY GREENBIE

## The New Books Science

(Continued from preceding page)

breathless research, of persistent but reasoned gropings, with never a letting-go of the guiding line of proof which, like the thread of Theseus, leads unerringly through the dark and tortuous regions of the Unknown out into the light beyond.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the work is its firm grasp of the vast amount of detail that has been sifted down to the intrinsic values of ultimate fact. For these values represent the precious residue from the winnowing of century-old dumpheaps of discarded theory and isolated discovery. Furthermore, the slow evolution of the grandest yet simplest ideas of Nature, its forces, laws and structure, is indicated briefly in these pages as forming the large background for the present viewpoint of advanced science. The future, stored with still more wonderful enigmas, is shown as beckoning the hopeful workers of today with a never-lessening lure of conquest. Indeed, the whole adventure reminds one of a busy mining scene with all its glamour and expectancy of sudden wealth. His choice of subjects in this volume displays the breadth of his attainments as clearly as the power of his discrimination in eliminating all but the more significant leads for scientific endeavor. These representatively illustrate the position already reached as to the more abstruse questions whose solution can alone open further avenues of progress.

In dealing with the Infinitely Small the greater part of the text is naturally devoted to the principal phases of the subatomic world. The nature of electricity, the value of the ultimate electric charge, the secrets of ionization and conduction, the divisibility of the electron itself, the atomic constitution, the nature of radiant energy, etc., are topics that sufficiently emphasize the character and importance of this work, which, until fresh discoveries shall further illuminate the road, will stand as the latest and one of the most reliable of our technical signposts to the great goal of all thoughtful travellers in this bewildering world.

## Travel

CANNES AND THE HILLS. By RENE JUTA. Small, Maynard. 1924. \$6.00

The author of this delightful and vivid book apparently lives or has lived in Mougins, but she tells much of Cannes and the blood and thunder islands in its harbor mouth, of St. Honorat with its monasticism in the shadow of which five hundred monks "found their crown on a lovely summer evening in the year 730," of the subsequent wavering fortunes, under Saracen and Frank, under Genoese and Frenchman and Spaniard, of that little island of the church now restored to holy protection. We hear the story of the virgins of Cannes who were carried off by the Saracens one fine day and, as if in answer to the persistent and horrified prayer of the local curé, were returned sixty years later, only to find that the home town would have none of them and promptly bundled them back into the Saracen ships, each with her eighty years! Still farther in the past, along the Aurelian Road went the tramp

and clatter of Roman legions, complaining of their helmets and the heat, leaving their sandal prints in the dust of roads now clouded in the wake of the winter visitor's Rolls Royce.

There is almost too much of romance in this marvelous world of the Côte d'Or, but there is a living breath blowing among the olive trees to keep the ghosts from smelling too much of their tombs. The life of the peasant and the small farmer here has in it the same essence that is to be found in the colors of history.

It would be useless to attempt a reconstruction of the atmosphere of René Juta's book. It is its own excuse for existence. It should be enough to say that it is, although the author's prose will not bear detailed examination in all cases, finely and surprisingly written. It presents a moved and pitious intelligence in the presence of a blessed and beautiful quality of earth. It has body and substance. We know of no other way of saying that it is a success.

LANDS OF THE ANDES AND THE DESERT. By FRANK G. CARPENTER. Doubleday, Page. 1924. \$4.00

This book takes us from Balboa at the Pacific end of the Panama Canal down into Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The most conspicuous feature of our journey is the remarkable spirit of enterprise and progress displayed by our South American neighbors.

Colombia leads the world in the quality of her coffee, and is second to Brazil in quantity only. "Yes! We have no bananas!" cannot be sung in Colombia. Sixteen thousand acres are under cultivation for that fruit alone, and the foreign trade yields one million dollars a year. The festive tonka bean furnishes perfumery and flavors tobacco. Metals, both useful and precious, abound. The emerald mines equal the "wealth of Ormus and of Ind." Bogota ranks so high as a city of culture that it is called the "Athens of America." The distinctive feature of Guayaquil, Ecuador, is that General Gorgas, of Panama fame, made it safe for Americans by eliminating malaria and yellow fever. Quito has a university older than Harvard. Its astronomical observatory purports to be the highest in the world. Ecuador is the native habitat of the chocolate eclaire. Cacao, its essence, is one of the country's chief crops. Ecuador can dispense with both the walrus and the elephant. Ivory, in nut form, grows on trees. Mr. Carpenter acquaints you with the Peru of today. You will learn of the march of political, economic, and social progress, and the spread of religious tolerance. The results abroad, together with the aspirations and emulation aroused there by our nineteenth amendment, will truly surprise you. The new discoveries of Inca treasure and antiquities will amaze you. The triumph of American mining and engineering skill will elate you. The tin mines of Bolivia furnish one-fourth of the world's supply. The quality is the purest. A block of ore weighing one ton contained twelve hundred pounds of tin, and this proportion is no exception. Bolivia also has untold wealth in precious metals, copper, petroleum, rubber, hard woods, and cinchona. As regards fertility, eastern Bolivia is a Garden of Eden. Until rendered more accessible, the country's future will remain uncertain. Being deadlocked, she has to depend upon her few railroads and the complaisance of her neighbors for the release of her commerce. Another phase of the transportation problem.

To designate Mr. Carpenter's work as a beau ideal of travel books is neither hyperbole nor an abuse of the superlative. Some travelers seek to impress you with their "ego." Others portray themselves as the original Marco Polo, Baron Munchausen, Mungo Park, or Major Mendax, *solo* or *ensemble*. Mr. Carpenter does neither. He never obtrudes himself upon the reader. Unusual occurrences, real adventures, are recounted by him as ordinary events in the day's work. Comments upon foreign countries and their people are devoid of acrimony.

Mr. Carpenter has the happy faculty of writing in a lucid, tasteful, entertaining and instructive vein. He robs facts of their dryness and deprives statistics of their terror. Concisely expressed, his style is artistically artless, simple, and near. The legion of fine illustrations lend unwonted charm to the volume, but the reader is not tempted to abandon the text for the pictures. The outline maps at the front and back of the book, however, are too ornamental to be really useful. Comprehensive page maps of the individual countries discussed would be a great improvement, and materially enhance the value of the work for all purposes.