

A Letter from Boston

By DALE WARREN

I REMEMBER an English publisher telling me not long ago that all English books emanated from London. By the same token, he thought that all American books of consequence bore the New York mark on their title pages. He was surprised when I cited a few conspicuous exceptions.

New England may have had her literary heyday when Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Louisa Alcott wrote in quiet Concord and, in leisurely style, carried their manuscripts into Boston to be published. None of us in this region of the Watch and Ward Society dispute the fact that New York is the center of publishing activity in America; we do feel, however, that Boston is still marked by a good-sized dot on the literary map, and we do not listen kindly to talk of the alleged decadence of New England in literature.

Take the Pulitzer Awards, for example. New England claims three of the five awards made this year. Amy Lowell was, by tradition, inheritance, and residence, a Bostonian. Furthermore, her volume of poetry, "What's o'Clock," which won the poetry award, was published in Boston. Edward Channing, who received the history prize for his "War for Southern Independence," was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, graduated from Harvard, took his Ph.D. at Harvard, and has been on the Harvard Faculty since 1883. Dr. Harvey Cushing, winner of the biography award for his "Life of Sir William Osler," is connected with the Harvard Medical School and a leading Boston hospital. "Craig's Wife," by George Kelly, which took the drama prize, was, incidentally, published in Boston.

It may not be amiss at this point to glance at the past Pulitzer Awards. In history there have been nine awards and New England has won four of them. These were bestowed upon James Ford Rhodes, Justin Harvey Smith, Charles Warren, and Professor Channing. In biography there have been ten awards and New England has won

five. The winners, in addition to Dr. Cushing, were M. A. De Wolfe Howe, Laura E. Richards and Maude Howe Elliott for the biography of their mother, Julia Ward Howe, Henry Adams, and Burton J. Hendrick, born in New Haven and educated at Yale. Out of the five poetry awards, New England can fairly be said to claim all, through Miss Lowell, Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson (two awards), and Edna St. Vincent Millay, a native of Maine.

So New England keeps her head high, and her publishers do not all think of moving to New York. Nor are "best-sellers" from Boston unheard of. "Scaramouche," "The Little French Girl," and "Soundings" are far from forgotten, and this year comes Sylvia Thompson's "Hounds of Spring," published as an Atlantic Monthly Press publication, by Little, Brown & Company, and prominently displayed in their Beacon Street windows. The book is now in its fortieth thousand. Miss Thompson is the young English girl who timidly said to Ellery Sedgwick, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, on his last trip to Europe: "You wouldn't read half a novel, would you?" Mr. Sedgwick replied that he would, and read the first portion of Miss Thompson's manuscript on the trip home. He lost little time in calling for the other half, and the rest is familiar history.

Miss Thompson's fearless and direct method of approach, coupled with the amazing maturity of outlook shown in her story of war-torn England, won to her side both critics and readers in a very short space of time. Contrary to the prevailing opinion, "The Hounds of Spring" is not Miss Thompson's first novel, although she is only twenty-three. Her earlier "Rough Crossing"—not from Calais to Dover but from childhood through adolescence—was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1924. It was written while she was still a student at Cheltenham.

"The Intimate Papers of Colonel House"

and Claude G. Bowers's "Jefferson and Hamilton" are two other Boston books which this year have climbed into the "best-seller" class, not to mention the always reliable Fannie Farmer's "Boston Cooking School Book."

As for "well-made" books, Boston can also claim a share of these. Of the "Fifty Books of the Year" selected by the American Institute of Graphic Arts on the basis of design and craftsmanship, eleven were published in Boston. Four were brought out by the Harvard University Press, three are on the Little, Brown list, and the others are divided among the University Press, the Merrymount Press, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Club of Odd Volumes. The Yale University Press and the E. L. Hildreth Company of Brattleboro, Vermont, also received recognition.

The *Atlantic Monthly* has recently made known the details of its \$10,000 contest for the best novel submitted before February 15, 1927. Few similar contests announced within recent years are capable of broader interpretation. There are no limitations imposed on the character of the novel submitted except that it be long enough to deserve publication as a full-length novel and be written in English. The interest which the story arouses in the reader will be the sole criterion of judgment. The winning novel will be serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly* and subsequently published as an Atlantic Monthly Press publication by Little, Brown & Company.

Another contest of interest to writers is the \$2,000 prize competition announced by Little, Brown for a story for boys and girls for inclusion in the series known as "The Beacon Hill Bookshelf." The high standard of the series is set by Louisa Alcott's "Little Women," which recently underwent translation into Chinese.

Book-Talks are becoming increasingly popular in Boston. During the past winter there have been lectures and informal talks about books and authors sponsored by the Boston Authors Club, the Bookshop for Boys and Girls, the Book Department of Jordan, Marsh & Company, William's Bookstore, the Boston Branch of the Dickens Fellowship, and the Marjory Knapp Bookshop. Henry Beston, Caroline Ticknor, Mary Caroline Crawford, Robert Hillyer, Allen Chamberlain, and John Clair Minot, literary editor of the *Boston Herald*, have been in demand as speakers.

The Boston Authors Club is now re-established at 3 Joy Street in attractive rooms presided over by a very lifelike photograph of its first president, Julia Ward Howe. Frederick Orin Bartlett, Abbie Farwell Brown, Basil King, Dallas Lore Sharp, Olive Higgins Prouty, Alice Brown, John Gallishaw, editor of *The Writer*, and Nathan Haskell Dole are some of its more active members.

Simmons College started its new school of bookselling this spring with successful results. The list of lecturers included Richard Fuller of the Old Corner Bookstore, Marion Dodd of the Hampshire Bookstore, Northampton; Marion Cutter of the Children's Bookshop, New York; Mae Massee of Doubleday, Page & Co.; Frederick G. Melcher, editor of the *Publishers' Weekly*, and Bertha Mahoney of the Bookshop for Boys and Girls.

With the publication by Houghton Mifflin on April 16th, of "O Genteel Lady," a new Boston author wrote her name in capital letters. In this vigorous and refreshing period novel of the Boston of the 1850s, Esther Forbes revealed a distinctiveness of style and an application of the principles of novel structure which marked her immediately as worthy of first consideration. The daughter of a prominent judge of Worcester, Massachusetts, Miss Forbes has steeped herself in the New England tradition which she recreates with a commingling of sympathy and satire in her story of the hoopskirt era. Her first serious literary attempt, a short story written while an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, appeared in the *Grimmell Review*, and was later selected by the O. Henry Memorial Award Committee for inclusion in the "Prize Stories of 1920." At the present time Miss Forbes is writing short stories before undertaking her next full-length novel.

Another Boston book, in origin as well as in subject matter, is Caroline Ticknor's "Classic Concord," which appeared this year in the anniversary of the battle of Lexington and Concord. In editing the Concord writings of Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and the Alcotts, Miss Ticknor has added brief yet definite biographical sketches written in the style of her earlier "Glimpses of Authors." Mrs. Larz Anderson has just published "Under the Black Horse Flag," an account of the old sea-faring days which she has based chiefly on material from ships' logs and family annals. Other recent

books by Boston authors include "Abraham Mitrie Rihbany's "Seven Days with God," Francis Bardwell's "The Adventure of Old Age," Lewis R. Wells' "Industrial History of the United States," William Dana Orcutt's "Writer's Desk Book," Gamaliel Bradford's "A Naturalist of Souls," and Ellery H. Clarke's "Carib Gold." Rumor has it that the Boston Public Library has just put in twenty-nine copies of the latter. Doris Halman, whose motor romance, "Honk," is this minute filling the windows of DeWolfe and Fiske's Bookstore on Park Street, was a Boston resident in the days when she worked with Professor Baker at the 47 Workshop. Cameron Rogers, author of the Whitman biography, "The Magnificent Idler," is another erstwhile Bostonian. He graduated from Harvard in 1923.

John P. Marquard has been living in Cambridge this winter and attending occasional meetings of the Boston Authors Club. Stockbridge claims him in the summer. Elliot Paul has temporarily forsaken Beacon Hill for Paris. Abbie Farwell Brown is spending the summer in Framingham, Massachusetts, and Sarah Ware Bassett has left Boston for her summer home in Princeton. She will later go to Edinburgh and plans to spend the month of October in Cornwall and Devon. Esther Forbes sails on June 19th. Archibald MacLeish, the Boston poet and lawyer, has gone to Persia on an errand for the League of Nations. Demetra Vaka and her husband, Kenneth Brown, are temporarily sojourning in these parts en route to their house at Dublin, New Hampshire. They are the guests of Lillie Buffum Chace Wyman at Newtonville. Eleanor Rowland Wembridge, the Cleveland psychologist, author of the recently published "Other People's Daughters," has come on to fulfil a lecture engagement.

Visiting authors have a reputation of gravitating towards Lauriat's Bookstore on Washington Street. Gilbert Frankau, however, was discovered autographing copies of "Masterson" at DeWolfe and Fiske's, and we understand that Christopher Morley always goes back to familiar territory at the Old Corner. Butterfield, the Bromfield Street bookseller, has enlarged his shop, but has retained its charm by keeping it all underground. Smith and McCance have newly painted their entrance on Ashburton Place and have a very up-to-date appearance. Boston bookstores are in the spotlight these days, as the *Boston Transcript* has lately inaugurated a new semi-weekly department, "Bookstall Gossip," conducted by Dorothy Foster Gilman, whose interviews and critical work are a regular feature of the Wednesday and Saturday editions. Another Boston reviewer, Dorothea Lawrence Mann, is frequently seen visiting the bookstores and publishers. She puts the books that she collects, as well as groceries, into a large velvet bag, and when it is full, goes home to Malden and gets to work. John Macy used to say to her: "Why don't you get a wheelbarrow?"

New Boston bookshops are the First Fellowship Bookshop and Lending Library at 6 Byron Street, and the Personal Bookshop on Newbury Street. Geraldine Gordon, who has for some years been identified with bookselling in Boston and Peterborough, New Hampshire, is now manager of the Hathaway House Bookshop, the cooperative bookstore at Wellesley. Ginn & Company are adding a wing to their Cambridge building.

Fall books are already beginning to loom on the horizon. Little, Brown will publish in August "Portia Marries," a first novel by Jeannette Phillips Gibbs, the wife of the author, Hamilton Gibbs. Before her marriage, Mrs. Gibbs lived in Lynn, Massachusetts. She was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar in 1918 and practised law in Boston for two years and a half. The following month Mr. Gibbs's new novel, "Labels," will appear, and shortly thereafter Larry Barretto's "Walls of Glass." The same publishers are planning to reissue Grant Allen's "The Woman Who Did," a novel which scandalized the Bostonians of 1895, when it first appeared.

Houghton Mifflin will bring out a new edition of Willa Cather's "My Antonia" and will shortly announce a novel, "Powdered Ashes," by Theodate Geoffery, whose "Immigrant in Japan" was published this winter. Their fall list also includes a romance based on the life of Heinrich Heine by Ludwig Diehl, and a volume of Reminiscences by Bishop Lawrence. Viscount Grey's "Faldon Papers" and Clemenceau's "Demosthenes," translated from the French, originally announced for Spring publication, have been delayed until the Fall. Small, Maynard will bring out a two volume biography of Shelley by Professor Walter Peck of Wesleyan University, and the Marshall Jones Company announce several new volumes in the series, "Our Debt to Greece and Rome."

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BORZOI BOOKS

The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Belles Lettres

- THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY. By *Charles Downing Lay*. Duffield. \$1 net.
 A BUCOLIC ATTITUDE. By *Walter Prichard Eaton*. Duffield.
 FRENCH STUDIES AND REVIEWS. By *Richard Aldington*. Dial. \$2.50.
 THE ABUNDANT LIFE. By *Benjamin Ide Wheeler*. University of California Press.
 EDITORIALS. By *Lafcadio Hearn*. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.
 THE VERDICT OF BRIDLEGOOSE. By *Llewelyn Powys*. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.
 EUGENICS AND POLITICS. By *Ferdinand Caning Scott Schiller*. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.50.
 WHAT IS CIVILIZATION? By *Maurice Maeterlinck, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, and others*. Duffield. \$2.50.

Biography

- REVOLUTIONARY DAYS. By *Princess Cantacuzène, Countess Speransky*. Scribners. \$3.
 BENVENUTO CELLINI: His Autobiography. Translated by *John Addington Symonds*. Scribners. \$2.50.
 IN DARKEST LONDON. By *Mrs. Cecil Chesterton*. Macmillan.
 MAPE. By *André Maurois*. Appleton. \$2.50.
 LIVES OF THE ENGLISH POETS. By *Samuel Johnson*. (Everyman's Library). 2 vols. Dutton. 80 cents each.
 THE RISE AND FALL OF JESSE JAMES. By *Robertus Love*. Putnam. \$2.75.

Drama

- ONE-ACT PLAYS OF TODAY. Second Series. By *J. W. Marriott*. Small, Maynard. \$2 net.
 THE WAY TO KEEP HIM. By *Arthur Murphy*. Oxford University Press. 35 cents.
 SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY OF ERRORS. Edited by *Clarence Stratton*. Allyn & Bacon. 60 cents.
 THE PRACTICAL THEATRE. By *Frank Shay*. Appleton. \$1.50.
 ALEXANDER AND THREE SMALL PLAYS. By *Lord Dunsany*. Putnam. \$1.75.

Education

- POETRY FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS. Books I and II. Edited by *Elias Lieberman*. Scribners. 92 cents each.
 STORIES FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS. Edited by *William Rabenolt*. Scribners. 92 cents.
 SHORT STORIES OF ENGLISH COURSES. By *Rosa M. R. Mikels*. Books I and II. Scribners. 80 cents each.
 ALEXANDER DUMAS, PÈRE HENRI III, ET SA COUR. Edited by *Maurice Baudin and Edgar Ewing Brandon*. Oxford University Press. 95 cents.
 EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES. By *Elmer Harrison Wilds*. Century. \$2.
 CENTURY READINGS FOR A COURSE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE. Edited by *Fred Lewis Pattie*. Century. \$3.50.
 EVOLUTION. By *J. Graham Kerr*. Macmillan.
 FINDING THE RIGHT TEACHING POSITION. By *Harlan C. Hines*. Scribners. \$1.60.

Fiction

- YE WHO JUDGE. By *HELEN R. MARTIN*. Dodd, Mead. 1926. \$2.

Mrs. Martin's latest novel does not reach the level of her most enjoyable work, but does not fall far enough below it to disappoint her well-established audience. Its background is the familiar region of the Pennsylvania Dutch, but its chief characters are not in this case drawn from them. Rather it concerns an Episcopal bishop in his early thirties, and the step-daughter of his uncle, the preceding bishop. At the beginning Peter Ammerman is strongly prejudiced against the girl, but it is the *raison d'être* of the three hundred pages which follow to dispel this prejudice. This they do readably and pleasantly; and Mrs. Martin saves her obvious and timeworn plot from disaster by her gift of humor and her ability at dialogue. Penny Lee, the heroine, has enough pertness and animation to tide over the lumbering excellencies of the hero. The title itself has so little bearing on the story, that one can only suppose it an apostrophe to the readers of the book, and in particular to the reviewers.

- EVA AND THE DERELICT BOAT. By *FRANZ MOLNAR*. Translated from the Hungarian by *EMIL LENGYEL*. Bobbs-Merrill. 1926. \$2.50.

It is difficult to suggest the precise flavor of these two delicately wrought novelettes by the author of "Liliom," but it is safe to predict that discriminating readers of Chekhov and Katharine Mansfield will find in them a not unfamiliar satisfaction. Here, too, are situations rich in emotional overtones and a taut technique that con-

centrates upon the significant and prevents the universal from seeming commonplace.

In "The Derelict Boat," the subtler of the two tales, a very young girl, little more than a child in years but unusually sensitive and mature intellectually for her age, falls in love with a man old enough—and morally lax enough—to court her fascinating mother. Molnar traces the successive stages of poor Pirko's infatuation, her fool's progress from illusion to disillusion, with such admirable restraint, such wise objectivity, that only upon reflection does one realize how deeply he has penetrated his theme.

The other story is more ambitious in design. Eva, a light lady of Budapest, recently divorced, decides to escape from the impending ostracism of the capital by visiting an elderly relative who directs operations in a remote and desolate mining village of the Slovakian mountains. This village, except for the negligible peasant population and two colorless household drudges, is womanless. The thoughts, emotions, and actions generated among the young officials of the mine by Eva's coming, the wake of tragedy and disaster that she leaves behind when she goes, these make up the tale. The pattern may seem a trifle obvious, but it is all etched in dry-point with never a touch of the burin.

The translation is in general smooth and only here and there does an un-English word or turn of phrase drop a sudden veil between reader and author.

- FLECKER'S MAGIC. By *NORMAN H. MATSON*. Boni & Liveright. 1926. \$2.

Mr. Matson has written a novel which is a little more than thinly amusing. One short chapter of undiluted satire offers very lively diversion. In this passage the philosophical witch who starts the plot moving, partially compensates for pages of dull, abstruse reasoning, by her description of the "Sacrifice of Fords" and the ceremony connected with "standardized suicide for the obscure."

Her theory of inverted evolution is also much to her credit. "A jelly fish turned into Napoleon because he wanted to?" she asks. "My hind leg! A man turned into a jelly fish precisely because he wanted to—because he did not want to think nor talk nor walk nor work."

The story of the American art student in Paris and his affair with the magic-ring bearing midinette is gayly told. The authenticity of this picture of contemporary life in the Latin quarter will be wistfully recognized by all who have dreamed through a sunny afternoon by the side of the Medici fountain.

- FLAPPER ANNE. By *CORRA HARRIS*. Houghton Mifflin. 1926. \$2.

It is apparent that Mrs. Harris is properly horrified by the depravity of her prize chicken; in fact so appalled is she by Anne's devilishness that her novel becomes in great part a pious and impassioned lecture upon the younger generation's iniquity. Anne, as the composite type of all her sisters, is graphically conceived, a distinct, not far over-done creation; her simple and naturally more appealing grandmother is drawn with corresponding skill, but the remainder of the characters of the fable, though readily recognizable, are left dimly in the background. Most of us are too hardened in actual waywardness and sin to mistake the frisky diversions of Anne's boy and girl companions for the direct road to perdition. We have known any number of their like—they perform fancy steps on thin ice above shallow water—and not one of them has yet been fatally submerged. Mrs. Harris, except for hysterically wringing her hands over the spectacle, has written an entertaining and, as Anne's grandmother might say, an excellent story.

- THE SHOALS OF HONOR. By *ELIZABETH SANXAY HOLDING*. Dutton. 1926. \$2.

This tale goes in heavily both for characters and plot. The latter concerns itself with a young man whose only work in life is the avoidance of work. Nature having done her bit in the way of making him gratifyingly handsome with a pleasing appeal to women,—middle-aged ones with money not excepted,—he is able to carry on very successfully in the luxury to which he has accustomed himself. It is love that at last opens his eyes to his real position in the body politic, and after a little false manoeuvring he finally steers clear of the

(Continued on next page)

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