

THE YEAR IN BOOKS



The Fashion of Anonymity Has Returned.

THE past year of book publication has witnessed a certain number of valuable contributions to several fields of literature. Certain sensational successes have colored the year; the popularity of Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street" continued with lessening vigor through 1921 and the anonymous (and sometimes unfair) authors of "The Mirrors of Washington" and "The Mirrors of Downing Street" enjoyed a réclame that hardly can be expected to last. The year as a whole has been one of reconstruction.

The book market has proved a riddle to most publishers, and books that were expected to sell in huge numbers did quite the reverse. Along in the Spring, centring through most of the month of May, came the bookbinders' strike, which held up many publications. Noticeable particularly throughout the year was a pronounced international tinge to publications, many translations making their appearance. Although superficially the year appeared to show a decided bent toward serious publication, this was not so much through a curtailment of the lighter forms of literature as through an emphasis on the serious volumes which appeared, both from critics and from publishers.

The year proved rich in biography, history and documents on contemporary happenings. A plenitude of travel books was to be observed, the strange places of the earth apparently attracting large groups of readers. The average of fiction was but fair, and it is to be doubted if anything of lasting import appeared. This field of publication exhibited a rapid pushing to the fore of a number of younger American writers, who will undoubtedly divert the stream of American fiction from the channel it has so long pursued. Poetry barely held its own; the renaissance that started some years ago seems to be merely marking time. It was too soon for war fiction, although a few books dealing with this topic made their appearance. Plays continued to be issued in attractive form and there can be no doubt that an audience for the printed drama has been built up. Russia still looms large in the book world, but it is no longer mainly represented by translations of Russian fictioneers. Now it is books describing conditions in the Soviet Republic, political studies and economic surveys. In the

Spring the craze for books dealing with spiritism seemed to die down, although an occasional volume is still being issued.

With these few scattered comments, it may be well to let the reader draw his own conclusions and to indicate a selected number of worth-while books which appeared throughout the year. Of course, the personal element must enter into any actual naming of volumes, and it must be borne in mind that as no one is infallible it may be possible that a number of books equally worth while as those mentioned, have been lost sight of in these surveys of the year.

HISTORY

The field of history was mainly limited to books regarding the late great war. "The Peace Negotiations," by Robert Lansing, was a book that appeared early in the year, caused a deal of talk and then seemed to settle into a definite obscurity. Another book dealing with the same topic was "What Really Happened at Paris," a symposium of articles by various men who attended the conferences at Versailles. This book was edited by Colonel Edward M. House. It threw light on many perplexing questions and undoubtedly was a sound addition to the great number of books which appeared dealing with the Peace Treaty. M. André Tardieu was the author of a volume, "The Truth About the Treaty," which contained material successfully outlining the French idea of what was accomplished at Versailles.

In respect to the war itself there were a number of instructive books. "Kiel and Jutland," by Georg von Haase, was an illuminating volume, and "With Beatty in the North Sea," by Filson Young, treated the same topic in vivid fashion. Sir Philip Gibbs had many new facts to give regarding the results of the war and they appeared in an entertainingly written volume called "More That Must Be Told." There were a number of lesser volumes dealing with the war and several which come properly under the heading of memoirs and biography. Getting away from the European debacle, there were a small number of authentic additions to the history bookshelf. Of course James Ford Rhodes's new volume of American history was a welcome addition to the several he has already completed. Rhodes is, perhaps, our most talented histo-

rian. "Mr. Punch's History of Modern England" was represented by the first two volumes in a series which will be completed in four. It proved a genuine addition to the best books of this class. H. G. Wells revised his "Outline of History," and it is now possible to obtain that delightful attempt in a single volume.

BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIRS

In biography and memoirs a larger latitude of inclusion must be made. For instance, there were the famous "Mirror" books. "The Mirrors of Downing Street," by "A Gentleman with a Duster," leaped into an undoubted popularity immediately upon its publication. This "Gentleman" used his duster in a later book called "The Glass of Fashion," which was amusing, albeit it was in bad taste. Then there came "The Mirrors of Washington," an anonymous publication which reflected certain of our national figures. The idea of the anonymous writer who, secure behind his veil, can present with impunity the weaknesses of a subject seems, if not cowardly, at least in bad taste at times. In a class with these books, but with the added virtue of the writer standing squarely behind his opinions, was "Washington Close-ups," by Edward G. Lowry. His book is an excellent performance.

Of course, no one need have recommended to him Lytton Strachey's admirable "Queen Victoria." This is a book that will undoubtedly take a definite place in the annals of English biography. Written with a subtle humor that will almost escape the unwary, it stands as an admirable bit of art. In it the entire Victorian era is recorded for all time.

Early in the Spring a number of books about the Empress Eugénie, who had just died, appeared. They had a transient vogue and then disappeared from view. Perhaps the two most important of these books during the year (her memoirs had appeared in 1920) were Count de Soissons's book, "The True Story of the Empress Eugénie" and Auguste Filon's "Recollections of Empress Eugénie." "Women in the Life of Balzac," by Juanita Helm Floyd, was another interesting book on a great French figure. Harold Nicolson's "Paul Verlaine," Stefan Zweig's "Romain Rolland" and Marie Duclaux's "Victor Hugo" are three volumes concerned with French writers that un-

doubtedly will prove of value to students of Gallic letters.

Royal Cortissoz was the author of an excellent life of Whitelaw Reid that presented a keen and truthful picture of that statesman. Also to be remembered was the "Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson," a work that proved a mine of information regarding tempestuous days in the career of the United States. "Reminiscences of Tolstoy," by Maxim Gorky, was a little book, but it was packed with authentic values, giving, as it did, a vivid glimpse of the great Russian. Then there were the "Memoirs" of Count Witte for those who desired to plunge into the whirlpool of Russian politics. "Out of My Life," was Field Marshal von Hindenburg's contribution to letters and it proved him almost as talented a writer as he is a general. A life of Cecil Rhodes was published which gave anew the oft-repeated story of the conquest of South Africa by Great Britain. "My Brother, Theodore Roosevelt," was an especially noteworthy effort by Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, and it speedily established itself as one of the more important additions to the season's output of Rooseveltiana. Another book concerned with the late ex-President was "Roosevelt in the Bad Lands," by Herman Hagedorn. Lyman Abbott gave to the public some amusing sketches in "Silhouettes of My Contemporaries," and circus-disciples should appreciate the sketch of Phineas T. Barnum that is included therein. "The Book of Jack London" filled the space of two large tomes, but Charmion K. London, widow of the writer, managed to make it interesting throughout. Viscount Escher was responsible for a book called "The Tragedy of Lord Kitchener," which presented one of the great tragedies of the war, and another absorbing side-light on a complex character was to be found in Lady Norah Bentinck's "The Ex-Kaiser in Exile." James L. Ford was responsible for many an amusing yarn in his "Forty-Old Years in the Literary Shop." It proved a delightful undertaking. Olga Metchnikoff's "Life of Metchnikoff" must not be forgotten, either. It outlined one of the great figures of the century. "In One Man's Life," by Albert Bigelow Paine, told of the undertakings of Theodore N. Vail and the many interesting crises he passed through. "My Life Here and There," by Princess Cantacu-

zène, and "Memories and Notes of Persons and Places," by Sir Sidney Colvin, were two books packed with illuminating anecdotes about famous figures. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's "My Diaries," which received an advance review, will be out on Dec. 5 to entertain readers. It is undoubtedly one of the big things of the year. And what pleasures lie in "Fifty Years as a Journalist," by Melville E. Stone. It is always a matter of interest when a journalist writes his memoirs, as witness Julius Chambers's "News Hunting on Three Continents." It is quite possible that some important books in this division have been overlooked, but surely those mentioned are sufficient to meet all tastes.

FICTION

One turns to fiction with uncertainty. Here what is one man's meat is another man's poison. The tight-rope between Harold Bell Wright's "Helen of the Old House" and Anatole France's "Little Pierre" must be walked, and the nervous acrobat must retain an insouciant smile while doing it. Having mentioned Mr. Wright and noting that his book has proved just as popular as his advertisements stated it would, promise is made to say no more about him. A return to Anatole France shall be made, however. Besides winning the Nobel Prize for Literature this year, he is represented by two translations. The aforesaid "Little Pierre" is one and the other is "Monsieur Bergeret in Paris," which completes a quartet of most amusing novels.

It may be wise to set forth the accomplishments of American writers in fiction first and then follow up with the English. American readers fall into two classes—those who like John Dos Passos' "Three Soldiers" and those who do not. Waiving any suggestion of discussing the value of this book or its lack of value, it may be stated that the volume is extremely interesting and will undoubtedly be read by all who follow closely the movement of our fiction. Booth Tarkington's "Alice Adams" was a novel in a new spirit for that writer, and while it did not deserve the praise that overloaded it, it is a book to be read. Ben Hecht's "Erik Dorn" was a strange, convulsive effort that brought a new force into

(Continued on Page 23)

The Year in Books

(Continued from Page 1)

American letters. The much heralded "The Beginning of Wisdom," by Stephen Vincent Benet, showed what everybody knew—that the young author possesses undoubted talent. It was far from being even a remarkable first novel, however. In these days when writers burst forth for the first time with "Erik Dorns" and "Mooncalfs" a first novel must be extraordinary indeed. "Figures of Earth," by James Branch Cabell, added nothing to that author's fame, although it had its moments. It is hard to write "Jurgen" without Jurgen; one might as well attempt to enjoy "Hamlet" without Hamlet. "The Seventh Angel," by Alexander Black, proved a desirable bit of workmanship, and "The Girls," Edna Ferber's first novel, was adequate to the standard it aimed at. Floyd Dell's "The Briary Bush" rather missed the charm of its successor, "Mooncalf." Trumpets must be blown for the arrival of "The Triumph of the Egg," by Sherwood Anderson. Again this writer proves that he is one of the most pronounced personalities in American letters. William Dean Howells was represented by a posthumous novel, "Mrs. Farrell," which added nothing to what we already know of Howells and was sufficiently innocuous to take nothing away. Ernest Poole's "Beggar's Gold," Alice Duer Miller's "Manslaughter" and Samuel Hopkins Adams's "Success," are all built for their respective audiences. They will hardly lift the average of American letters, however. Grant M. Overton was responsible for an entertaining experiment in putting Walt Whitman into a novel yclept "The Answerer." Thomas Dixon, who writes badly but so vigorously as to be interesting, came to the fore with "The Man in Grey," a novel supposedly about Robert E. Lee, but which really presents as its most vivid character John Brown of Harper's Ferry. The book resolves itself into an unrelenting attack on John Brown, and not, one gathers, without reason. "The Daughter of the Middle Border," by Hamlin Garland, a sequel to an earlier book, is just what one would expect Hamlin Garland to write and Lloyd Osbourne joins the South Sea expositors with "Wild Justice," a volume of short stories.

Now for the English. Certain successes stand out and, perhaps, the greatest of these is "If Winter Comes," by A. M. S. Hutchinson, which resolves itself into an excellent story excellently told. May Sinclair's "Mr. Waddington of Wyck" deserved all the praise it received and perhaps a bit more. It was an admirable bit of portraiture. John Galsworthy's "To Let" was another novel that deserved all the success it received. This book was a clever and keen study of certain aspects of modern English life. W. Somerset Maugham was represented by two books. "Liza of Lambeth," one of his earliest novels, was reissued on this side of the Atlantic and turned out to be a tale of London slum life, much on the order of the stories of Arthur Morrison. "The Trembling of a Leaf," offered between covers a collection of Maugham's short stories of the South Seas. D. H. Lawrence, that analyst of the human soul, continued his prolific strain with two novels, one of them, "Woman in Love," being brought out in a deluxe edition. The other effort was "The Lost Girl." Both of these books showed Lawrence in his familiar vein as an analyst of love impulses. Sheila Kaye-Smith was represented by "Green Apple Harvest," another tale of that part of England, Sussex, which she has made so particularly her own. Oliver Onions broke his long silence with "A Case in Camera," a cleverly developed mystery yarn and W. J. Locke, as whimsical as ever, continued to hold his popularity with "The Mountebank." "The Man Who Did the Right Thing" was Sir Harry Johnston's addition to his shelf of novels, this story being laid, for the most part, in Africa. It was well done, but did not obliterate the remembrance of "The Gay Dombey's." Those two purveyors of fiction to the not so critical audience, Sir Hall Caine and Marie Corelli, were present with "The Master of Man" and "The Secret Power," respectively. It is enough to announce that both books were up to their authors' standards. Hugh Walpole's two volumes, "The Thirteen Travelers," a number of

short stories, and "The Young Enchanted," gave evidence that this English writer still possesses the undoubted ability to tell a good story. Among the other books that should be recommended as quite successful and worthy of reading were "The Green Bough," by E. Temple Thurston; "Original Sinners," by H. W. Nevinson; "Quiet Interior," by E. B. C. Jones; "The Grey Room," by Eden Phillpotts; "The Herapath Property," by J. S. Fletcher; "Signs and Wonders" and "Revolution," by J. D. Beresford; "The Council of Seven," by J. C. Snaith; "Privilege," by Michael Sadleir, and "The Willing Horse," by Ian Hay Beith. Neither must the reader avid for good things pass over "The Wolves of the Gods and Other Fey Stories," by Algernon Blackwood. This master of the eery proves as fine as ever.

Certain foreign books stand out. Three novels by Knut Hamsun appeared, "Growth of the Soil," "Shallow Soil" and "Pan." Before this article is printed it is possible that a fourth one, "Dreamers," will be issued. Also there was "The Torrent," by Blasco Ibáñez.

POETRY

The year's achievement in poetry was distinctly limited. First of all stood the "Collected Poems" of Edwin Arlington Robinson. Then there were Wilfred Owen's "Poems." This small book brought to American readers an English war poet who ranks with the best. "Poems New and Old," by John Freeman, exhibited a poet who possesses an authentic claim to his title, but who appears tempted to write too loosely and too much. Anna Wickham's "The Contemplative Quarry" was a book that aroused some discussion, but its values did not prove lasting. Then there was John Masefield's narrative poem, "King Cole," and Miss Amy Lowell's colorful "Legends." "Collected Poems," by Edward Thomas, was a book that deserved all the popularity it got, and "Selected Poems," by William Butler Yeats, plainly showed that that master is rapidly losing affection for his earlier bits of atmospheric writing. An entertaining little book was Robert Graves's "The Pier Glass."

ESSAYS

In essays there were a number of decidedly entertaining volumes. One can do no more in the limited precincts of a single article than skim off the cream and enumerate the few books that personally appealed. By all means first stand Max Beerbohm's two volumes, "Seven Men" and "And Even Now." Both of these volumes proved an endless delight. W. H. Hudson came to the fore with "A Traveler in Little Things," which presented him as the expected master in the short essay form. "If I May," by A. A. Milne, proved to be an amusing volume of short pieces. Joseph Conrad was represented by two books, "Notes on Books," rather hard for the limited purse to purchase, and "Notes on Life and Letters," somewhat easier to obtain. Both were worth securing, even if at some small inconvenience. Francis Hackett collected some of his delightful essays from The New Republic and offered them in a volume entitled "The Invisible Censor." Frank Moore Colby's "The Margin of Hesitation" brought back to memory one of the finest of American essayists and "More Trivia," by Logan Pearsall Smith, will undoubtedly find a warm spot in the hearts of Smith fans. Marsden Hartley's "Adventures in the Arts" will prove pleasing to the not too critical reader. More of Lafcadio Hearn's scattered bits were collected into a book called "Books and Habits." One must not forget Lionel Johnson's "Reviews and Critical Papers." It was a little book, but it might almost serve as a textbook of how to do it for ambitious reviewers. "Under the Maples" was a posthumous collection of John Burroughs's delightful nature essays.

TRAVEL

The number of travel books published during the past year is manifestly so large that whatever the selector does he is bound to miss certain books that he should have included. Such being the case, he can but bow his head to the impending wrath and name a certain number of volumes that would seem to stand out as examples of the various

(Continued on Page 25)

The Year in Books

(Continued from Page 22)

types of travel books. As long as it is so near Winter it may be appropriate to open the list with "The Friendly Arctic," by Vilhjálmur Stefánsson, a delightfully written book about a great undertaking. The atmosphere of the cold North rushes through the rather large volume. Being nothing if not dexterous, a jump is immediately made into the much-advertised South Seas. Frederick O'Brien, whom there is a temptation to nominate as Grand Bham of the South Seas, under the title of Hoopa the First, was represented in the Spring by his delightfully written "Mystic Isles of the South Seas." This was a book full of charm and novelty and a rattling good narrative. In Mr. O'Brien's books one does not have to wade slowly through endless pages regarding the geological strata of Tahiti; he reveals the beating pulse and atmosphere of the Isles of the Tiare. Then there was E. Alexander Powell's "Where Strange Trails Go Down," a book as delightful as its title. "Faery Lands of the South Seas," by James Norman Hall and Charles Bernard Nordhoff, proved a distinctly charming effort, and Captain C. A. W. Monckton's "Taming New Guinea" proved a bit more serious.

A book that caused a deal of amusement was "The Cruise of the Kawa," by Captain Traprock, a burlesque on the avalanche of South Sea books that had been appearing. George S. Chappell, it is rumored, was responsible for this volume and he established himself decisively as a humorist of genuine ability.

Those who love good travel books must not pass Isaac Marcossion's "An African Adventure." It was good, and so, too, was "Across Mongolian Plains," by Roy Chapman Andrews. W. L. George, who visited the United States, set down his conclusions in "Hail Columbia," and we can but answer, "Hail George! You were mighty amusing, but you got us all wrong at times." H. M. Tomlinson's "London River" was a worthy successor to "The Sea and the Jungle." Tomlinson is one of the finest English stylists writing today. "Mysterious Japan" was Julian Street's account of a trip to the Flowery Kingdom during which he kept his eyes just as widely open as he could. The volume proved delightful from beginning to end. William Beebe's "Edge of the Jungle" brought before readers some vivid pictures of British Guiana. There was a distinctly literary note to the book, but it will be a long time before readers will forget his amazing account of an ant army. Two other travel books of more than ordinary excellence were "Westward Hoboes," by Winifred H. Dixon, and "Working North from Patagonia," by Harry A. Franck. The idea of hoboing one's way through foreign lands is always of appeal, and it is extremely interesting to learn how one does it.

RUSSIA

Russian books and volumes concerning Russia continued in sufficient amount to warrant their having a classification of their own. Among the more important may be noted "The Russian Workers' Republic," by H. N. Brailsford; "The Crisis in Russia," by Arthur Ransom, and "Russia in the Shadows," by H. G. Wells. This last named book occasioned some controversy, and Sir Henry Arthur Jones was to the forefront as an antagonist of Wells. The results of Sir Arthur's attacks have recently appeared in a volume entitled "My Dear Wells." There were but few translations from the Russian during the year. Constance Garnett added a new volume to her series of translations from Fyodor Dostoevski, and The Dial Publishing Company was responsible for "Hé, the One Who Gets Slapped," a play by the late Leonid Andreyev. Of course, we must not forget Clare Sheridan's diary, "Mayfair to Moscow." At least, it was entertaining.

DRAMA

Among the plays that were published during the year, one must immediately note Edmond Rostand's "Collected Plays." This two-volume set was an excellent piece of typography, and it offered in new translation all of Rostand's dramas except the posthumous "Le Dernier Nuit de Don Juan." John Drinkwater's "Mary Stuart" had a success and, of course, there was

George Bernard Shaw's tremendous effort, "Back to Methuselah." In this series of five plays, really making up one huge drama, Shaw revealed himself as much more serious than ever before. Eugene O'Neill's "Emperor Jones and Other Plays" was an offering of importance, although the same can hardly be said for his other book, "Gold." The year was prolific in published plays that were running on Broadway, among them being "The White Headed Boy" by Lennox Robinson; "The Wandering Jew" by E. Temple Thurston; and "Dulcy" by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly. James Forbes's volume, "The Famous Mrs. Fair and Other Plays," gave the reader an opportunity to analyze how popular successes are made and Gordon Bottomley's "King Lear's Wife and Other Plays" revealed a poet of undoubted strength and beauty in drama form.

MISCELLANEOUS

It is undoubtedly true that a number of important books have been omitted from the foregoing. This is partly because many books do not enter readily into classification. Among them may be noted "The Beloved Ego," by William Stekel; "The Story of Mankind," by Hendrick Willem Van Loon, a delightful piece of work; "The Dance," by Ivan Narodny; "The Folly of Nations," by Frederick Palmer, and "Lost Ships and Lonely Seas," by Ralph D. Paine, wherein great sea tragedies are retold. Hector C. Bywater's "Sea Power in the Pacific" was a book that treated an important topic in an authoritative way, and Brander Matthews's "Essays on English" proved invigorating. Will Irwin was responsible for a book called "The Next War," which had its moments of gravity. Levers of humor should not miss Don Marquis's "Old Seak," a volume that contained a laugh in practically every line.

No attempt has been made to enumerate any juvenile books. The output was so great and the average of excellence so broad that readers are referred to the various articles which have been appearing in this section during the last few weeks.

As one looks back on it the season was an extremely prolific one, offering many unusual books and several volumes of undoubtedly standard values.