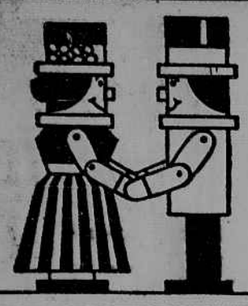

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The Library of a Lover

List of Marriageable Books Is Sought by Perplexed Young Man

By Heywood Broun

The responsibilities of a book reviewer, always heavy, sometimes assume a gravity which makes it quite impossible for them to be borne on any single pair of shoulders. We have received a letter upon which so much depends that we hesitate to answer it without the advice and support of our readers. It is from a young man in Pittsburgh who identifies himself merely by the initials X. Q., which we presume to be fictitious. He writes as follows:

"As a reader of the book columns of The Tribune I am humbly requesting your assistance in the matter of a little experiment that I desire to perform. I find myself highly enamored of a superlatively attractive young lady who has, however, one apparent drawback to me. That lies in the fact that she has never cultivated a taste for really worth while reading. Such reading to me is one of the greatest of life's pleasures. Now, my idea is this: that this reading taste may be developed by the reading of a number of the best books in various lines. I have decided upon an experiment wherein a list of fifty books shall be furnished by you and a serious attempt made by the young lady to read them. When she has completed this reading I shall ask her to make a thoroughly frank statement as to whether a reading habit has been cultivated which will enable her to enjoy good literature. I would appreciate very much your furnishing me a list of fifty of the very best books which you consider suitable for the experiment which I have in mind. The lady in question has read but little, but has completed the regulation high school course and in addition has taken two years at one of the recognized girls' schools of the country."

Obviously, the making of such a list involves a responsibility which we do not care to assume. We do not like to risk the possibility that our own particular literary prejudices might rear a barrier between two fond hearts. After all, as somebody has said, fond hearts are more than Conrads. However, we do venture the suggestion that if the young man's intentions are honorable, fifty books is far too great a number for the experiment which he has in mind. We have known many a young couple to begin life with no possession to their name but a common fondness for the poems of W. E. Henley. We have known others to marry on Kipling and repent on Shaw.

Of course, it would be a great deal easier for us to advise the young man if we knew just what sort of a wife he wanted. If she likes "Dombey and Son" and "Little Dorrit" it seems to us fair to assume that she will be able to do a little plain mending and some of the cooking. On the other hand, if her favorite author is May Sinclair, we rather think it would be well to be prepared to provide hired help from the beginning. Should she prefer Eleanor H. Porter, we think there would be no danger in telling the paperhangers to do the bedroom in pink. After all, if she is a thoroughgoing follower of Pollyanna and the glad game, you don't really need any wall paper at all. It would still be her duty to be glad about it.

But we are afraid that some of this is frivolous and beside the point, and we assume that the young man truly wants serious advice to help him in the solution of his problem. Since marriage is at best a gamble, we advise him earnestly not to compromise his ardor with any dreary round of fifty books. Let him chance all on a single volume. And what shall it be? Personally, we have always been strongly attracted by persons who liked "Joan and Peter," but we know that there are excellent wives and mothers who find this particular novel of Wells's dreary stuff. There are certain dislikes which might well serve as green signals of caution. A young man, we think, should certainly go slow if she does not like "An Inland Voyage," or "Virginibus Puerisque," or "The Ebb Tide" or "Sentimental Tommy." He should take thought and ask himself repeatedly "Is this really love?" if she confesses a distaste for "Tono Bungay," or "Far From the Madding Crowd," or "Cæsar and Cleopatra." And if she can find no interest in "Conrad In Quest of His Youth," or "Mary Olivier" or "Huckleberry Finn" let him by all means stipulate a long engagement. But if she dislikes "Alice in Wonderland" let the young man temporize no more. It is then his plain duty to tell her that he has made a mistake and that what he took for love was no more than the passing infatuation of physical passion.

Lafayette

Popular Account of His American Visits

WITH LAFAYETTE IN AMERICA. By Octavia Roberts. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York and Boston.

The story of Lafayette will always be one of the most cherished memories of the American Revolution. In all history there is no more romantic and appealing figure than this young Frenchman, an aristocrat of one of the oldest European kingdoms, who came to place his life and fortune at the service of a young republican people struggling for liberty.

The author relates various incidents of Lafayette's first two visits to America, at the time of the Revolutionary War. She tells of the rebuffs which the young stranger received from some of the narrow-minded Congressmen, of Washington's quick appreciation of his courage, ability and devotion, of his participation in the sufferings at Valley Forge and the final triumph at Yorktown. Miss Roberts also quotes from letters written by Lafayette to his wife, letters which admirably portray the lovable and vivacious character of the author.

The book also contains a full account of Lafayette's less well known final visit to America, in 1824, when every section of the country united in a hearty welcome to the venerable hero of the Revolution. Lafayette made a tour of the United States at this time, winning the hearts of all who met him by the grace, courtesy and urbanity of his addresses. Written in a popular style and very handsomely illustrated, Miss Roberts's book should prove especially popular at the present time, when the ties between the sister republics of France and America have been so much strengthened by the late comradeship in arms.

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SEQUOIA SONNETS. By Charles Keeler. Published at the Sign of the Live Oak, Berkeley, Cal.

A collection of sonnets inspired by various romantic themes.

Philosophy

THE LARGER VISION. By Anne Bryan McCall. Published by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

Essays on moral subjects for women and girls.

THROUGH THE SUNLIT YEAR. By Ralph Waldo Trine. Published by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

A book of suggestive thoughts for each day in the year from the writings of the author of "In Tune With the Infinite."

Fiction

THE MAN THAT NEVER GREW UP. By Mabel C. and William A. Lathrop. Published by the Britton Publishing Company, New York.

A whimsical story of small town life.

THE TANGLED THREADS. ACROSS THE YEARS, THE TIE THAT BINDS. By Eleanor H. Porter. Published by the Houghton Mifflin Company, New York and Boston.

Three volumes of Mrs. Porter's collected short stories. The numerous admirers of "Pollyanna" will doubtless derive equal pleasure from these stories.

Juvenile

RED BEN: THE FOX OF OAK RIDGE. By Joseph Wharton Lippincott. Published by the Penn Publishing Company, Philadelphia.

The story of a fox and his war with a farmer.

TWIN TRAVELERS IN THE HOLY LAND. By Mary H. Wade. Published by Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York.

The story of twins, boy and girl, who enjoy a delightful trip through the Holy Land.

Miscellaneous

AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK. Published by the Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia.

A comprehensive record of Jewish activities all over the world during the past year.

ACES FOR INDUSTRY. By Rufus Steele. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company, New York and Boston.

A short story pleading for increased production in industry and for greater sympathy on the part of the individual worker for his job.

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DAVID BELASCO
Author of "The Theatre Through Its Stage Door."

(Published by Harper & Bros., New York. Picture drawn by K. A. Gumuchian.)

Enter David Belasco

"Wizard" Tells of Some of His Tricks in New Book of Stage

THE THEATER THROUGH ITS STAGE DOOR, by David Belasco. Edited by Louis V. De Foe. Harper & Bros., New York. $2.00 net.

The dwellers in Wiseacre Square who enliven dinner parties with "inside" gossip of the stage and its people will not find many additions to their repertory in Mr. Belasco's book. "The Wizard" has told in a series of unrelated essays some of his theories and practices in the theater, but the volume does not reveal much that is not already common knowledge or common talk. After all, one hardly could expect so shrewd a man as Mr. Belasco to divulge trade secrets for the price of one publication.

It will be a surprise to many, however, to learn that the producer of "The Gold Diggers" could serve with distinction as a back-page sermonizer for any evening newspaper. We submit in evidence two specimens of his prose, one ethical and one descriptive:

"The theater has its temptations, but so has the studio, or factory, or shop, or any other vocation in which an unprotected woman may be placed. Girls have been known to make missteps even in the home, where they are safeguarded on every side."

. . . "Nature is as complex in her moods as a woman. Mark the lowering anger of a March day, with its driving clouds and frowning, barren landscape. But April is all tears and smiles, symbolizing the spirit of awakening nature and growing things."

Nor is Mr. Belasco untutored in the trick of the snappy phrase. He describes Theda Bara as the "sinuous priestess of the obvious." We wonder whether Editor De Foe did not insert a few literary flashes by way of friendship.

The most striking part of the book is the section dealing with the value of stage lighting. Here Mr. Belasco expounds fully the methods which have brought him his reputation. The script and the actors may be never so good, he insists, but the illumination of the stage frequently is the factor that makes a production a ticket-agency buy or a cut-rate "dump." It is interesting to hear that one act of "The Boomerang" depended principally on the work of the electricians for its appeal. The notion seems fantastic, in view of the overwhelming success of the play, but the failure of the piece in London, where Mr. Belasco was not present to supervise matters, may be considered as testimony in favor of "The Wizard's" contention.

Young authors will find little encouragement in the pages devoted to plays. "No good plays come in unsolicited," says Mr. Belasco. With the exception of "The Easiest Way" and "The Secret," every script that has been produced by the house of Belasco has required the most thorough overhauling at the hands of the master.

It is recorded that "The Rose of the Rancho" was the result of five months of steady rewriting, and that "The Boomerang" was battered about for two or three years before it was ready for the stage. We wish that Mr. Belasco had offered a few parallel versions, so that we might have seen how a raw attempt was metamorphosed into a finished hit. To which Mr. Belasco might answer: "What do you want for the price of one weekday night orchestra seat without war tax?"

The maker of many stars is altogether frank in outlining the methods employed to create luminaries. He regards actors as "nothing more than emotional children," but his attitude is kindly and paternal. "I have never resorted to bullying," he says. Of course, that's a matter of definition. Mr. Belasco tells us how he cultivated the scream which Frances Starr used so effectively in "The Easiest Way." The actress seemed not to know the mental torture through which the heroine was supposed to be passing. So Mr. Belasco, in his fatherly way, rehearsed her for three hours one afternoon in one scene, storming at her until her nerves were worn out. A final sneer brought a scream and a dead faint.

"That's what I want!" exclaimed "The Wizard." "That's what I've been working for these last three hours."

Some of Mr. Belasco's observations on actors may result in awkward half hours for him. He tells us that he was not impressed greatly with Mrs. Leslie Carter until she gave him a graphic recital of her domestic woes. Then he saw in her the makings of a great emotional actress. Probably ever unhappily married woman in town will be clamoring for admission to the Belasco sanctum one of these mornings. Mr. Belasco leaves himself a way of egress with the statement that "it is not well for an ambitious young actress to encumber herself with a sweetheart or a husband, especially in the early period of her career."

There are not a few inconsistencies in the book, but it's a readable effort which will give any devotee of the theater an interesting evening. And it's not at all unscholarly. There are many allusions that indicate Mr. Belasco's close study of the history of the stage, and there's a certain aesthetic value in a photograph of "The Wizard" at work in front of a fireplace which contains "seventy-three tiles taken from the Alhambra at Granada, Spain."

R. A. SIMON.

Helena

Gently Attractive Tale By Mrs. Humphry Ward

HELENA. By Mrs. Humphry Ward. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

Mrs. Ward's new novel is devoid of the rather heavy political background which appears in some of her earlier works. Except for a few incidental references to the extravagance and labor unrest which have come over England since the end of the war, the author keeps closely to her story, which is concerned with a few characters, rather well drawn, rather uninteresting and eminently respectable.

The pall of respectability really hangs rather heavily over the whole book. The author only introduces two figures who would be ostracized from the most exacting social circles—a rake of a lord who is properly reprobated by the other characters and never appears in the story at all and a woman who serves as a foil to the correct gentleman whom she married and deserted.

Mrs. Ward's technique is excellent; she relieves a rather tame love story at the proper place with an element of mystery and excitement, and she weaves the tangled threads of her double romance into a charming web at the conclusion. She is conscientious in her character drawing, and the background of an English manor house is sketched without exaggeration or inaccuracy. But there is no compelling sweep about the novel; it may gently attract and hold the reader's interest; it cannot excite and grip it.

Love, Mystery, Action

The GIRL in the MIRROR
By Elizabeth Jordan

A FASCINATING love and mystery story which, according to the San Francisco Chronicle, "is full of action and as speedy as a machine gun." (A Century book. At all bookstores. $1.60.)

New England

Historic Nooks in and About Boston Described

A LOITERER IN NEW ENGLAND. By Helen Henderson. The George H. Doran Company, New York.

Miss Henderson interprets New England from the triple standpoint of the skilled art critic, the historical scholar and the observant traveler. Her description of "monumental Boston" is marked by keen and intelligent appreciation of the city's art treasures; and out of the musty Colonial records of the New England states she has dug numerous interesting anecdotes of the Pilgrim Fathers and their doings. The sympathetic humor which appears in her account of the idiosyncrasies of some of the modern inhabitants of Massachusetts is admirably illustrated in the following story:

"There was old Nathaniel Woodbury, of Folly Cove; he opposed the building of the trolley car line that passed his property in circling Cape Ann. His official protest availed nothing; so during the remainder of his long life the old man proceeded to ignore the existence of the offense. When he walked out he walked in the middle of the track, and, as he was totally deaf and well known to the motormen of the line, most of whom are Gloucester boys, they had no choice but to murder him or to stop the car and escort the obstinate old fellow out of the way. Of course, they chose the more humane course, and it became a typical scene at the Folly to see a stalled car and a courtly motorman leading Mr. Woodbury out of harm's way."

Evidently, Mr. Woodbury inherited all the stiff-necked qualities of his Puritan ancestors. In a chapter entitled Old Landmarks, the author traces the story of Old South Church, a building which is perhaps as rich in historical associations as any other in America. In her study of Boston Miss Henderson duplicates, on a smaller scale, the achievements of her previous work, "A Loiterer in New York." She combines in a delightful manner discriminating art criticism with keen human appreciation of many aspects of the city's life. Miss Henderson's work is a guidebook of a very unusual and excellent type: it interprets the intangible spirit as well as the external features of the places it describes.

THE GOLDEN WEST BOYS: INJUN AND WHITEY. By William S. Hart. Published by the Britton Publishing Company, New York.

Another book in the "Golden West" series describing the adventures of two boys left alone in a wild country.

About a Column

More About Morals

Well, well, well! We're thoroughly squelched. We are quite contrite at having treated Miss Lewis's "Defense of Literary Censorship" in such light and illogical vein. As we eagerly perused her burning denunciatory paragraph, we were tempted to hide our weak intellect with shame. Never before have we been called so many unusual things in one fell breath. Before the resounding close of the first paragraph we had discovered that those who took issue with Miss Lewis are amusingly ignorant of human nature, lacking in logic, unable to discern between morality and immorality, human moles and in all probability not citizens of this broad and beautiful land of the free. Aside from these failings we probably haven't the slightest resemblance to a Bolshevist, a hun or the missing link, except in face and form. But speaking of the moral question, what is the line of demarcation between morality and immorality? Just where is it drawn and how clearly is it defined? In France, to our puritanical minds, it is shifted considerably to the immoral side of things, and yet, who is so egotistical and self-centered as to say the French are an immoral nation? The great and altruistic object of our advocates of book censorship is avowedly to protect the "youth of the land" from "mental dyspepsia." By all means let us protect them from this terrible disease, but let us not do it at the expense of our literature and art. National prohibition was caused by a minority unable to drink spirituous liquors temperately, and another minority bent on saving the first minority from themselves. The Bolshevist régime in Russia, despite its name, was instituted by a few and is operated by a few.

In life we must have the evil with the good. In our literature, evil is rightly depicted as well as the good and if the "youth of our land" are such intellectual lobworms as to be unable to choose the right from the wrong, let us institute a reform in our educational system. Darwin and Haeckel are well-worth reading, even though we do not agree with them, and who will say that the Bible is worthless even though he has progressed from the intellectual slough that gobbles down Adam and Eve, Jonah and the whale and Noah and his ark at a single gulp. Thomas Paine has written in "The Age of Reason" a clear and concise analysis of the Bible. Should it be suppressed because the "youth of the land" reading it may have instilled into their weak minds doubts of the truth in the Christian religion? Because that greatest of realists and short story writers, de Maupassant describes a "woman of the streets" in Paris and fails to loudly denounce her and moralize, is it reasonable to suppose that every flapper of sixteen or seventeen after reading it will take to the streets in search of a career? Chaucer wrote considerable drivel that wouldn't fit in a Sunday school lesson, but should he be suppressed on that account? Nick Carter, Horatio Alger, Burt L. Standish and Harold Bell Wright are quite moral as the definition goes: good inevitably triumphs; evil reaps its bitter reward. And yet, the youth who forms his opinion of literature and life in general from this type of book is sure to be in a bad way.

By all means let us save the poor youth of our land, who are undoubtedly tottering on the brink of moral degradation, but why not do it by educating the mind to choose between the good and the bad, instead of following in the footsteps of the "drys" and trying to legislate sin and crime to the scrap heap and by constitutional amendment uplift the minds and morals of degraded mortals living their lives by their own lights.

G. S. H.

A Poet Resigns

Shaemas O'Sheel has resigned from the Poetry Society of America and sends us his letter of resignation as well as a more general message explaining his position. We take the liberty of quoting only in part from each of these communications:

"I say that the Poetry Society of America is nothing but a conspiracy against literature in America, and that you who are members of it are being duped and abused. I call upon you to take your stand by those great figures of American literature who have rebuked the witch-burning activities of this so-called 'Poetry Society': William Marion Reedy, Edgar Lee Masters, William Ellery Leonard, Witter Bynner, Ivan Swift, Nathan Haskell Dole, Rev. William Livingston, Rev. Francis Kelly, Rose Pastor Stokes, Dr. Louise Kuefner, Jare Burr Clement Wood and others. I call upon you to cease to support this fraud in the name of poetry, to disown connection with something that is fast becoming ridiculous, to leave the sinking ship, to resign!

"There have been a number of resignations in addition to my own; Conrad Aikens, Padraic Colum, John Curtis Underwood, etc. Still more members have quietly dropped out. They could not afford to resign openly because their positions rendered them vulnerable to the vendetta of the committee.

"There will arise soon in America an association of artists guided by the true spirit of devotion to the Arts—and in this all may unite who shall have repudiated the unclean thing calling itself 'The Poetry Society of America.'

"But I am glad that the Oligarchy has disclosed itself as it has. So far as I have power, I shall expose the threat it levels against American culture; I shall expose it as an organized attempt to pervert American taste and deceive American opinion, for the profit of those 'in the ring.' I shall point out how it is attempting, through the library committee, to dictate the poetry-buying, poetry-reading and poetry-lecture field of America, and that its library committee in reality is one ignorant woman, who recently, in the presence of one of America's most cultured women, disclosed that she had never heard of Theodore Dreiser, John Hayden Holmes, Helen Keller, Owen Lovejoy and a dozen other eminent writers; who advocated burning Socialists at the stake, and who disclosed exactly the degree of freedom from personal bias she may be expected to display in her dictatorship by saying that I had been 'expelled' from the Poetry Society!

"I say, I shall try in every way to expose the fraudulent and dangerous character of this so-called 'Poetry Society.' I only wish that I had copies enough of this year's booklet of 'best poems' read at the society's meetings for the libraries of America."

James for Breakfast

No one has rushed a reply to 'M. D. B.,' so I must register a protest against her totally wrong view of Henry James and the dining table. Beary is preëminently the writer for meals, especially corn meals. Corn must be munched (read Wiley, read Fletcher), and no sentence of James is too exciting or too long for one mouthful of corn. Rumination is an essential accompaniment of corn eating; our best corn eaters all do it, as I can prove to you if you will come out to our farm some day. Does 'M. D. B.' dare to assert that one can read James without ruminating?

"As even the newspapers to-day share the quality along with mystery and German spy stories of keeping one's heart in one's mouth, effectively preventing mastication and swallowing, therefore there is nothing left but James as a necessary meal-time accessory."

ANNE E. MASON.

And Now He Too Can Read "Slippy McGee"

THERE is a man in Boston whose eyes are not strong now. He has a great many things read to him. One of the books recently read to him was Marie Conway Oemler's "Slippy McGee."

The story persisted in standing out in his memory above other things he had heard. He often wished that he could read it with his own eyes. He probably wanted to get closer, as it were, to Slippy McGee, burglar and butterfly-man, to Mary Virginia and to good Father De Rance, who one night rescued Slippy's tools from the interior of a statue in the church and helped him crack a safe for the sake of the girl they both loved. He probably wanted to know better all the other delightful and memorable people whom the author makes to live and love and laugh in one of those quaint, little, old Southern towns so full of memories and romance and individuality.

And so finally the Boston man's wife commissioned a famous old New England printing-house to make an edition of just three copies of "Slippy McGee," each in two volumes because the type had to be so large. And by Thanksgiving this one of the thousands of lovers of "Slippy McGee" will have the novel by his side to read with his own eyes over and over again.

If by any mischance you have not read "Slippy McGee," do go buy a copy and give yourself a treat. And buy another copy for some one else who is entitled to a treat. It is sold at all bookstores for $1.60.

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