# EDITORIAL

## Our Summer Book Number.

THE Summer Book Number of *Books and the Book World*, appearing next Sunday, June 16, will contain replies of American publishers to the question: "What sort of books are you most eager to publish?"

This is only another way of asking: "What sort of books do you believe American readers most want at this time?" For in general publishers seek to give the public what the public wants, not what they think it ought to have. Their chief problem, since it takes some time to bring out a book, is to forecast with accuracy what the public will want six months ahead.

We think the publishers' answers will interest our readers. Regard them simply as guesses, more or less shrewd, if you like; they are interesting even so. Consider them as reflecting certain policies and traditions of various firms, and you will find a number of the replies distinctly enlightening. Next week, when we print the answers, we hope to discuss them in this place; we won't say "elucidate" them lest some one have his intellect hopelessly clouded by what we may say. We have no undying confidence in our ability to make anything clearer than we found it.

All authors are cautioned not to read the publishers' announcements of what they want (or think readers will want). An author who would listen to a publisher's suggestion would abdicate his role as an Artist and impair his function as a Creative Interpreter—or is it Interpretative Creator?

## You Are Asked to Meet—

*And*—AND! as JULIUS HARBURGER used to exclaim when making an important political address.

The Summer Book Number will contain *A Night With Galsworthy in Chicago*, the first of a series of personal glimpses of contemporary English, Irish and French writers by BARRETT H. CLARK. The articles of this series will appear, at the rate of one every week or two through the summer. The second of these personal glimpses will be of JOSEPH CONRAD, who reveals himself through the medium of a long letter dealing with the purpose of his most effective novel.

An article by DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH on the new styles in love stories will appear in next week's number of *Books and the Book World*. There will *not* be an interminable list of Books Suitable for Summer Reading—but there will be lots and lots about entertaining new books.

## "Ardours and Endurances."

THIS is to be a piece about a book of poems and poetry but couched in simple prose; so read on.

On May 12 there was printed in *Books and the Book World*, on the page devoted to verse, part of a poem called *The Assault*, by Lieut. ROBERT NICHOLS, Royal Field Artillery, British Army. The poem in its entirely may be found in several places; but it will perhaps be better, if you wish to read it all, to look for it in its first setting, a book of NICHOLS's poems called *Ardours and Endurances*, published by the Frederick A. Stokes Company. There it falls naturally into place, as one of eleven poems grouped under the heading *Battle*.

*Ardours and Endurances* is not fresh inked from the presses. The jacket of the copy we are glancing at carries the enthusiastic words of American reviewers (meaning those who take new books and pronounce sentence upon them, so that the author frequently finds himself condemned without public trial, the public not having had a chance to see his book). In the case of NICHOLS these authorities had only "nice things" to say.

They were too careless to be honest. Why not have stated that *Ardours and Endurances* is largely poetry which most readers will think full of faults, of unscanning lines, of missing rhymes? Why not have said that a third of the volume consists of a long poem which none but those who can appreciate MILTON's *Comus* are likely to enjoy?

Why not be straightforward? Perhaps people ought to get pleasure out of *A Faun's Holiday*, the masque which makes the middle of the book. But most of them won't.

It requires a natural love of beauty cultivated to a considerable degree to read and *enjoy* such verse as this. Generally a bit of the old "classical" education is requisite; unless you have been sufficiently steeped in the past to comprehend and revel in the pagan love of beauty, such stuff as *A Faun's Holiday* is lost on you. You had much better go and take pleasure in the color and motion of the ballet made from DEBUSSY's *A Faun's Afternoon*.

## Are You a Panisk?

People who are uncertain as to just who PAN is, who can't place SILENUS without consulting some compendium of classical terms, who never heard of ASSARACUS, must either prepare themselves for a sustained intellectual effort or leave *A Faun's Holiday* alone. They will, at best, be able to delight in nothing but the music of the words. They will like, of course, such lyrical lines as these:

"If this be sleep, I do not sleep.
I hear the little woodnote weep
Of a shy, darkling bird which cries
In a sweet-fluted, sharp surprise
At glimpse of me, the faun-beast, sleeping
Nigh under her."

Any one can get pleasure out of that. But it requires knowledge not yet common property to understand, let alone enjoy, these lines, a little further along:

"DIONYSOS in headlong mood
Ranged through the labyrinthine wood;
Fleet maids sped, yelping, on with him,
Brandishing a torn heifer's limb,
Dissonant cymbals, or black bowl
Of wine and blood; a wolfish howl
Fled ululant with them. . . ."

Yet this passage, so mystifying to many, is in nowise inferior to the lines about the startled bird; the pictorial quality is as sharp, the musical character as strong, the significance much greater.

But all these merits are obscured completely if the reader is unacquainted with the Greek god and his rites. Mostly he is, and there is only one man living who can help him. Let him first read GILBERT MURRAY's writings and particularly his versions of EURIPIDES. After he has read understandingly and with some appreciation MURRAY's translation of the *Bacchae* NICHOLS's lines will yield him their full content of beauty.

## Why So Perturbed?

Why fuss so much about a single poem in a book of poems?

Because *A Faun's Holiday* is the finest thing in the book; and we say that with a full recognition of the excellence of NICHOLS's war poems, notably *The Assault*.

Because his book of verse was offered to no end of American publishers and was by them rejected, the rejection in most cases being due to the presence of this poetic masque, MILTON would have hard work to get *Comus* published nowadays and rightly so; why should a publisher put out a book which he knows won't sell enough copies to meet the costs of publication? There are reasons why he should—at some times. But he must "know when."

*A Faun's Holiday* is of further importance because the faun is a symbol for the poet himself as shown by the concluding words:

"I wander on, I fade in mist,
O peopled World, and dost thou list?
Pipe on, difficult pipes of mine;
There is something in me divine,
And it must out. For this was I
Born, and I know I cannot die
Until, perfected pipe, thou send
My utmost: GOD, which is
THE END."

And these lines uttered by the centaur explain the title of the book and of that part of it composed of war verse:

"Sing as a man, stride as a horse.
Then stride I? Swift I overcome
The fleetest. Sing I? All are dumb.
Natheless my heart demands in grief
Ardour, endurance and relief;
Asks, but receives not."

## War Poems.

The war poems in *Ardours and Endurances* must be read keeping in mind two excerpts from MARK LIDDELL which preface the book. Away with iams and trochees and the rules of meter, away with rhymes too where these cumber the expression of a thought or idea. The burden is laid upon the poet of achieving and upon the reader of finding rhythm of ideas—whatever that is—where rhythm of sound is absent.

And yet with the exception of *The Assault*, which is pure imagism, pure picture, NICHOLS gets his best effects where he has rhymes and where he sticks pretty faithfully to meter. *At the Wars* is an example.

But the poem that will please most readers best is *Comrades: An Episode*, which tells the story of an officer shot down in No Man's Land on patrol. His men do not see him fall. He lies there the rest of the night and through the next day, finally crawling back to the front line trench only to find himself unable to get over the parapet. A lookout espies him and a corporal and another leap out to rescue him. They compass it, but are both shot. The dying officer asks: "Who's hit?" and when told murmurs: "I see it was alone I should have died. . . . Lift me. . . . O my men, my men!"

As for *The Assault* it will probably never be equalled in kind. This relentless portrayal of the sensations of an officer leading his men over the top and into hand to hand fighting is a perfect piece of work.

Here any ordered meter or scheme of rhyme would be artificial, fatal. It is necessary that the lines should reproduce the breathlessness, the anguish, the disorder, the exultation of those life and death moments—and they do.

## "Brother Lead and Sister Steel."

We have seen only one other poem comparable with *The Assault* and that is SIEGFRIED SASSOON's *The Kiss*, in which the frenzy is cold but intensely lyrical:

"To these I turn, in these I trust:
Brother Lead and Sister Steel.
To his blind power I make appeal;
I guard her beauty clean from rust.

"He spins and burns and loves the air,
And splits a skull to win my praise;
But up the nobly marching days
She glitters naked, cold and fair.

"Sweet Sister, grant your soldier this:
That in good fury he may feel
The body where he sets his heel
Quail from your downward darting kiss!"

The difference between this and *The Assault* is that *The Kiss* is terribly ironical, saying in effect: "This job of killing has to be performed; do you, Lead and Steel, help me to the 'good fury' necessary to perform it well!" Whereas *The Assault* is a reproduction of the job itself.

The third part of *Ardours and Endurances* consists of *Poems and Phantasies*, of which it must be said that some of the poems will be enjoyed by every reader, while others will make their appeal only to a qualified few. However, the lines on *The Water Lily* are of a sort that gives widespread pleasure:

"The Lily floated white and red,
Pouring its scent up to the sun;
The rapt sun floating overhead
Watched no such other one.

"None marked it as it spread abroad
And beautifully learned to cease:
But Beauty is its own reward.
Being a form of Peace."

The eye is caught by the date of composition affixed to this as to most of the poems in the book.

It is 1913.

## Mary Webb's Other Novel.

READERS of *Gone to Earth* who turn to MARY WEBB's other novel which E. P. Dutton & Company brought out some time ago will possibly feel disappointed. It is always a mistake to feel disappointed. As a matter of fact, the right sensation for the reader of *The Golden Arrow* who has previously read *Gone to Earth*—and of course you want to feel the right sensation just as you want to wear the right clothes and say the right things—the right sensation is a feeling of instructedness, of enlightenment.

So this, you should be saying to yourself, is the measure of her achievement in *Gone to Earth!*

The trouble with *The Golden Arrow* is that before you are half way through you know that STEPHEN SOUTHERNWOOD is going to desert his wife and, after a suitable interval, return to her. You know just how she will take the blow and just how she will forgive him when he comes back. It's like a play that collapses at the end of the second act.

Not only does *The Golden Arrow* lack every element of suspense from the middle on; it also presents the traditional, tiresome, sentimental view of men and women in their principal relation with each other—marriage. The further it proceeds the more sentimental it grows. If it had only been written backward it would have been a great book.

In *Gone to Earth* there are scarcely any explanations at all. Things just happen. Well, not *just* happen; for from the first few pages the sense of something tragic and terrible and supremely pitiful impending fills your heart and brain.

And the story is told with such art that the reader does not realize until afterward with what absolute genius Miss WEBB has told it. Among the first few words uttered in the book are those of HAZEL WOODUS's to the little fox, her pet: "If you'm alost, I'm alost." Now for those sharp enough to perceive it this is a perfect compression of everything that is to come. Literally and figuratively it tells the whole story.