

## Oldfield's Book for the Motorist

A GROUP of articles on how to care for an automobile, by Barney Oldfield, which appear to have been published in newspapers, have been gathered together and made into a book entitled *Barney Oldfield's Book for the Motorist* and provided with an extremely dry account of this famous automobile racing driver's life written by Homer C. George. The twenty-five chapters of the text cover every conceivable feature of owning and running a motor car from suggestions as to the type to purchase, the practice of economy (help, help!), "noises and how to cure them," the anti-glare problem and driving suggestions and "Don't's." The thirty illustrations of the chassis, engines, &c., are very clear as reproductions and are most helpfully explained. We are of the opinion that this book should have a place in the working library of every beginner at the game of owning and driving a motor car.

BARNEY OLDFIELD'S BOOK FOR THE MOTORIST. BY BARNEY OLDFIELD. Small, Maynard & Co. \$1.50.

## SPRING BOOKS

Leacock Solves the Kaiser Problem!

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Author of "Nonsense Novels," "Literary Lapses," "Frenzied Fiction," etc.  
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The thanks of many nations are due to Stephen Leacock, the gifted Canadian humorist, for solving the much debated question, "What shall we do with the ex-Kaiser?" He is coming (they are all coming, Uncle William, Cousin Ferdinand, Willie, Lizzie and the entire Hohenzollern family) as immigrants to America. At least so Mr. Leacock tells us in this, his latest book of irresistible fun and humor.

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OF ALL BOOKSELLERS

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## Louis Untermeyer as a Poetry Critic

By CONSTANCE MURRAY GREENE

IN speaking of *A New Era in American Poetry*, Louis Untermeyer's snappy spring volume, there is no need to go afield for words. Stranded on a desert island with this book we would guarantee to contribute indefinitely criticism of a vigorously polished nature on any variety of poet. It is a collection of articles, reviews and digressions which have appeared during the last seven or eight years, and while we would not be willing to say of it, as Mr. Untermeyer does of another, that "this tome crumbles under a great weight of words," there are distinct signs of tottering.

"For the first time a great part of American letters is actually American. Poetry has swung back to actuality, to heartiness and lustiness, and most of all to democracy. The poet has been set free to face the welter and struggle and beauty of the modern world. But unless he can make his world as actual and convincing as our own, he will fail." Later on we are to discover that the mere writing of actual poetry is not enough; "factual" poetry is the thing!

Mr. Untermeyer gives first consideration to Robert Frost, who, he believes, has expressed the poetic feeling for ordinary life more simply and richly than any other of the young poets of our day. James Oppenheim's work is next considered; "a violent contrast to that of Frost, showing the greatness of the sweep encompassed by the new spirit in our literature." We wish Mr. Untermeyer wouldn't keep calling it *our* literature when we all know it is *his*. He knows what volumes "will occupy a significant if not a prominent place when the critical history of American literature is compiled," and provided he is living at that time in this or another guise, he will undoubtedly write it.

In the case of his principals, the great stars in his literary firmament, he has shown admirable thoroughness, mentioning each of their books in turn and quoting lavishly besides offering really valuable information about their lives, which is sometimes extremely difficult to obtain. His fund of factual items is marvellous. Vachel Lindsay he allows is a "minstrel turned missionary; a corn fed Apollo singing to convert the heathen." Carl Sandburg's "uplifted coarseness, his almost animal exaltation, which is none the less an exaltation," finds great favor. The startling fact is revealed that Mr. Untermeyer and Harriet Monroe (and possibly Mr. Masters) have discovered that it was Sandburg who shook Edgar Lee Masters out of his literary rut and spurred him to write the *Spoon River Anthology*. This, we should say, ought to give Sandburg a prominent place in the Critical History of American Literature.

It is in the chapters of Masters that we have found the most profound enjoyment. You may agree or not with what Mr. Untermeyer has to say—that is neither here nor there—but you will not fail to find delight in watching him lay himself and his victim out. Mr. Masters, unless we know him less than we believe, will get quite as much pleasure out of it as the rest of us. Having departed from Spoon River, where in the minds of most critics Masters should live and die to be neatly buried beside his creations, our literary guide does not allow that he has done any very fine work. . . . "It is an almost tragic thing to leave these epic heights," he says, "and turn to Masters's succeeding three volumes. The mantle of a pedagogic prophet is put on in *Songs and Satires*; in *The Great Valley*, a jumbled scientific learning sits heavily on the poet, and in *Toward the Gulf* he stinks beneath it. . . . Masters begins to run on alarmingly (but Untermeyer is not alarmed, we might add). . . . This is scarcely credible. . . . There are forty verses with a side line argument that read like a weak, posthumous poem by Swinburne touched up by George Sylvester Viereck!"

With Amy Lowell, who is called a female Roosevelt among the Parnassians; Ezra Pound, whose death notice we have not time to quote; Wheelock, Robinson, Charles Erskine Scott Wood and Giovanni, the longer studies are complete and our attention is called to little groups such as "Beret, Bynner and Brody," "Sara Teasdale and the Lyricists." Among the lyricists are included Margaret Widemer, by the skin of her teeth; Edna St. Vincent Millay, Anna Hempstead Branch

and a few others. "There are, of course, half a hundred more minstrels in these States who please the populace with their amiable tinklings. But these have scarcely a transient claim on our attention." Names dear to Mr. Untermeyer, such as Ridge and Brody, have not much more on ours, but let us try to avoid this clumsiness of expression.

It is to be noticed that the living fact of which Mr. Untermeyer has so much of praise to say is inseparable from the living writer. A contemporary poet who has given his life for the country in which the book will circulate is not necessarily mentioned. Is it, perhaps, expedient that those nearest the author should come into

the circle of light? One may be expected, however, for having expected some mention, friendly if no more, of Kilmer. The mention (and the only one) will be found on page 111, as follows:

"Edwin Arlington Robinson has already found direct disciples in poets like Joyce Kilmer (*vide his 'Martin'*) and William Stanley Braithwaite (*Sandy Star and Other Verses*)."

Mr. Untermeyer admits that he has not "the aloof and olympian attitude toward art which is so often supposed to represent the true poise of criticism."

THE NEW ERA IN AMERICAN POETRY. By LOUIS UNTERMAYER. Henry Holt & Co. \$2.25.

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