REPUBLIC BOOK PAGE :-: BOOKS AND THEIR MAKERS

The Trifler

INTRODUCING FUTILITY .. ..

(From A. E. Housman's Later Poems.)
Yonder see the morning blink:
The sun is up, and up must I,
To wash and dress and eat and drink
And look at things and talk and think
And work, and God knows why.

Oh often have I washed and dressed
And what's to show for all my pain?
Let me lie abed and rest:
Ten thousand times I've done my best
And all's to do again.

A young man came to the door the other day.

"Has the assessor been here yet?" he demanded.

"I think not," said Annabel.

"No!" he replied apocalyptically. "I'm the assessor."

Is this a nemesis sent out from an earthly tribunal to catch us in our lies? Would the young man's eyes have blazed like swords of the angels guarding Eden's retrospect had he trapped a lie? Be ye also ready, for ye know not the day or the hour when the assessor cometh!

What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not wait for an answer.....We don't even ask. As civilization advances truth becomes more relative. Social intercourse is incompatible with truth. A man might live on an inaccessible mountain peak and not be a liar. But we rather imagine even Prometheus kept telling the eagles that the liver was all gone. Prometheus was too modern, anyway. Had he lived today he'd put a power plant on Mount Etna.

We have our recognized protagonists of falsehood who urge us to lie to life.

Hear Monsieur Emile Coue: Day by day in every way, I'm better and better.

As a matter of fact you woke this morning with weaker eyes and more poison in your blood and more lime in your bones and harder arteries. You are merely trying to cover your cravenness with a braggart lie.

Literature is not dead in Indiana. We introduce the evidence:

The greatest surprise to a girl who gets kissed the first time, is that there is no taste to it.—North Judson (Ind.) News.

No taste to it? Well by the hen feathers on Cupid's dart, but the News man must be color blind in the palate. They tell us, those who have tried it, that it tastes like the double distilled essence of honey spread thick on a piece of pumpkin pie. Away back in the dim, joyful years ago before we lost our teeth and our cinch on the beauty prize, the prettiest girl in all the world told us with her eyes that it felt like a covey of quail flying out of each ear and ended with a sensation like a flock of angels pouring molasses down one's back. No taste to the first kiss? Great Scott! It would make a wooden cigar store Indian's hair curl and his toe-nails quiver in ecstacy. Editor McCormick of the News, by the way, a few years ago a state senator, must be an ice house.—Monticello (Ind.) Journal.

Every once in a while someone raises the clarion call:

"Fear death? To feel the fog in the throat?"

And we treasure the challenge in our trembling bosoms every time a cortege goes by. Death grins. And if it is no palpable challenge, it is the armament of our sophistication. We dance and whirl and sing. And like whirling dervishes we can't stop. If you stop you think. The gloss of words is wiped out as night wipes lightning out of the sky.

You might, accidentally, think about futility. And that is an idea so dangerous that Bolshevism shrinks away from it like a little white lamb before a wolf.

The greatest and most dangerous philosophical poem ever written is this:

The bear went over the mountain,
The bear went over the mountain,
The bear went over the mountain
To see what he could see.

The other side of the mountain,
The other side of the mountain,
The other side of the mountain
Was all that he could see.
And yet they suppress agitators.

There is a legend buried deep in the Talmud of a man who gave the lie to death. He lay in his hovel sick with fever. Death came. "It is time," he said. The sick man looked at him shrewdly. "You have been here before," the sick man said. "Why so I have," said death. "So I have." And he looked at the sick man with quiet mirth in his eyes and went away and never did come back.

Words! Words! Words! Man's toy balloons released against the infinite sea of eternity, tossed about by the winds that run between the stars! Man's bombastic password to eternity! Will the Archangel Michael, leaning on his vast spear at the gate of heaven, recognize it?

It is a remarkable fact that in the biological history of man speech began to develop when man lost his tail. Until then man needed no speech. And despite Mr. Herbert George Wells' picture of Utopia where all speech is mere thought transference, this will be impossible until man has redeveloped a tail. Only science cannot be expressed by the wagging of a tail. All other things, philosophy, emotions, poetry, find in it a natural expression.

Recall Gilbert's heroic lines:

There is beauty in the bellow of the blast;
There is grandeur in the growling of the gale;
There is eloquent outpouring
When the lion is a roaring
And the tiger is a-lashing of his tail.

Oh, I like to see a tiger
From the Congo or the Niger
And especially when lashing of his tail.

EPILOGUE OF A COLUMN CONDUCTOR

(Also from Mr. Housman)
Now dreary dawns the eastern light,
And fall of eve is drear,
And cold the poor man lies at night,
And so goes out the year.

Little is the luck I've had,
And oh, 'tis comfort small
To think that many another lad
Has had no luck at all.

—Don Juan.

THE WELLSIAN UTOPIA

Men Like Gods, By H. G. Wells. New York, The MacMillan Co., 1923. ($2).

Thorough and versatile Mr. Wells! He has not only given us The Outline of History, but he has written this last novel as a sort of last chapter of his history, turning from the past to the future, indicating what man, whom he has traced upward through darkness, may accomplish when a little more light is turned on by science.

As you may have guessed, the middle word in the title is not a verb. The "men like gods" are the citizens of Utopia, a planet that is three thousand years in advance of earth's civilization. This is not Sir Thomes More's Utopia, nor anybody else's. It is emphatically Mr. Well's Utopia. It is a planet whereon dwell such glorified creatures as Mr. Wells thinks earthlings may become, beautiful human creatures of god-like stature and noble bodies. The Utopians live in a world that they have adapted to their needs with an adaptation much more complete and more ingenious than civilization on earth has yet dreamed of. They have simplified their living and increased their ability to think: as for their ability to feel—well. Mr. Well's suggests that three thousand years of hyper-civilization would somewhat change man's emotional reactions.

A thoughtful British gentleman of more or less limited means and a world-weary brain starts out from his home in his funny little motor car for a vacation. He finds himself suddenly, with his car and with a limousine full of more or less famous folk, on a road in a strange country, an astonishingly beautiful smooth road that crosses a landscape that is more beautiful than he or the limousine travelers have ever seen on earth. In a small building near the road, which seems to be a sort of laboratory, there is fire, and near the building are the dead bodies of two experimenters, a man of divine beauty and a goddess-like girl. The earthlings find that their exit from earth and their sudden dropping in upon Utopia are the result of the scientific investigations of these two, investigations in unguessed dimensions.

The discoveries of Einstein are crudely elementary compared with the knowledge of time and space that the Utopians command. These earthlings they find intruding upon their planet, spirited there by an inter-planetary curiosity, interest the Utopians as scientific phenomena and suggest to them the character in their Utopian ancestors. Their Last Age of Confusion, recorded in Utopian history, is strangely similar to the world situation after the World war.

The earthlings, with the exception of the thoughtful gentleman who started out on his vacation, don't approve of Utopia. A priest who was traveling with the limousine party objects to the nakedness of the god-like men and women and is horrified to find that Utopians have love but not marriage; that they regulate the population according to the planet's needs and requirements. Freddy Mush, a literary Englishman with an eyeglass, thinks the fact that there are no swallows anywhere is symbolic of the serious lack in Utopian nature. Lady Stella is afraid, finding no compassion among her Utopian hosts. And the British secretary of war, who is among the earthlings marooned in Utopia, decides to assemble the dozen or so people from earth and conquer the god-like race. (Mr. Wells is, you see, poking a little innocent fun at Great Britain's imperialism.)

Into this book have gone most of the Wells ingredients—except the sparks of novelistic genius that went into such a Wells book as The New Machiavelli. There is some humor, part of it supplied in the conventional manner by making comic figures of a pair of chauffeurs. There is much preachment, with an optimistic outlook for the future and a pessimistic denunciation of the present. There is irony, too—ironical portraits of what are supposedly typical Britishers, an American and a Frenchman.

Whether or not there is prediction—we shall have to wait a few thousand years to discover.

M. N. G.

AN AMERICAN SAILOR

The Life of an American Sailor, Rear Admiral William Hemsley Emory, U. S. N. Edited by Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves, New York. George H. Doran Company, 1923. ($4.00.)

Because the story of his life is told largely in his own words, through the record of his letters and memoirs, there is less of William Hemsley Emory in The Life of an American Sailor and more of the history of the American navy than we could wish. For, exactly as it should be, of course, this sailor was a modest man, and reserved, to whom action was everything and talking about it, next to nothing. The seeker after subtleties and charm of manner will therefore, not find those qualities in these memoirs.

Least of all will be found any mention of heroism, except as it is to be deduced from the unadorned report, or from matter of fact statement, in letters and other documents of Emory's, or from the comments of an editor who could not be accused of volubility.

What this volume sets out to do, and all that it wants, is to record, from first-hand sources as nearly as possible, the honorable life of a man who served his country ably in three wars. From the age of twenty-six, when he attained his first command, through a career covering command of eight more ships, including a battleship, a division of four battleships in the fleet, and a squadron of eight battleships, until his retirement in 1908. A service covering nearly fifty years.

Fifty years of life on all the seas of the globe, in war and in peace, not to mention periods of service in a diplomatic way, such as being naval attache at the court of St. James.

In his earlier days in the navy, Emory was important in the rescue party sent to the Arctic to find Greely; later this experience of his helped him in the Bering sea. He was in Chinese waters during the war between Japan and China; served of course in the midst of things during our war with Spain; and, by no means least interesting to these memoirs, he was part of the American navy which Roosevelt started in 1907 on its cruise around the world.

It was after this cruise that Emory hauled down his flag and retired to live in Washington, until his death in 1917. He was not, says his editor, what is nowadays called a highbrow; he never invented anything, and he did not do any constructive work—whatever that phrase means—but he left behind him an example of marked efficiency and of unselfish devotion to his profession which will serve as a light for those who follow in his wake.

The Life of an American Sailor is full of allusions to encounters with celebrites everywhere, and we quote from Mrs. Emory's diary some of her impressions of Emporer Wilhelm received when he and the empress were visiting England in 1889, during Emory's service there as naval attache.

"The review was superb.....The emporer arrived mounted on a superb animal. He remained motionless during the review except when saluting. When the review was over the troops formed the opposite side of the immense field. In an instant the emporer put his horse at a run, waving his sword with his right hand and rushing directly at the troops. None of the attaches could keep up with him. Knowing his left arm was useless it seemed as tho there must be an accident if he was not able to stop his horse, but the animal stopped just short of the troops... ..Hassenclever, the German attache, explained later that the emperor always travelled with his own horses, which were trained like circus horses and obeyed the spoken word. The reins were attached to his left hand, as he could not hold them, leaving his right to handle the sword."

How welcome a guest the emperor was in England, you will gather from what Mrs. Emory has further recorded:

"On one occasion when he finally took his departure, Lord Latham, upon whom the onus of his visit had rested, came to our box at the opera and asked if he might sit with us. He said to me, 'Madam, if you were an Englishwoman I should say, 'Much to our regret, His Majesty has left us.' To you I can say, 'Thank God, that boy has gone home!' He never retires until the morning hours, and a couple of hours later he is up and out again, tripping over the buckets of the housemaids who have waited patiently to clean the halls."

P. T

A DRUG FIEND'S DIARY

Aleister Crowley has written a new book which has made a bigger sensation in London than Jurgen did in America. The London newspapers carried seven-column headlines about him on their front pages and The Diary of a Drug Fiend became the center of a raging storm. Some critics cried: "Burn the book!" Others called it "A work of genius that will rank with De-Quincey's Confessions of an Opium Eater."

As for the author, Frank Crowninshield, editor of Vanity Fair, writes: "Aleister Crowley is one of the most extraordinary Britishers — a poet, explorer, mountain climber, an adept in esoteric philosophy — in short a person of so many sides and interests that it is no wonder a legend has been built up around his name in his own lifetime.

"He has published more volumes of poetry than he has lived years, and has climbed more mountains than he has lived months. The Equinox, his work on occultism, is only a part of the gigantic literary structure which he has built up in the past five years.

"In 1900 he explored Mexico without guides. Two years later he spent many months in China. In 1906 he crossed China on foot. The success of his drama The Rites of Eleusis in London, 1910, did not tempt him to settle there for long, as he was next heard of in the heart of the Sahara.

"As a naked yogi, he has sat for days under the Indian sun, begging his rice.

Like every true magician, he has experimented with hundreds of strange poisons. He shocked the orthodox with his book, The Sword of Song, which was virtually an attack on everything established—but soon compelled them to forgive him because of the religious fervor of his next volume—a book of devotional hymns.

"He has hitherto lived in Paris when not on his travels. One of his friends is Augustus John, the painter, who has done some wonderful sketches of him."

The Diary of a Drug Fiend is a novel about cocaine, heroin, morphine and opium, a true story in which the characters and places are disguised under the veil of fiction. In graphic detail Crowley paints the delirious ecstacies of the false paradise of the drug user and finally describes his own amazing theories as to how society shall rid itself of this bondage. It is a terrible story, yet one of hope and strength; a revelation of a startling abyss, and of a saving power.

Evelyn Scott's Escapade

Before Evelyn Scott wrote her autobiography, Escapade (Thomas Seltzer), she began and destroyed five or six novels written about the same three years in her life as are dealt with in her autobiography—the years of her exile with her husband in Brazil. Her experiences there, she was driven to conclude, were too tremendous to be veiled in novel form.

"At last I faced the situation," she said the other day. "I had to write the story, and the only satisfactory way of telling it was to write it all just as it happened. After a few days of awkwardness in the use of the first person singular, the insurmountable difficulties I had met before disappeared, and the book almost wrote itself. All the memories that were clamoring for expression were released and took form as if by magic."

Escapade, Evelyn Scott's publishers say, is an extraordinarily sincere and moving record of the thoughts and emotions of a woman in the most significant moments that come in a woman's life.

There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face.

Hear one man before you answer, several before you decide.

Vincent Blasco Ibanez.

In The Temptress, a novel promised for publication by the Duttons late this month or early in August, Ibanez turns again to the South American scene. The action centers around an engineer working on irrigation projects in the Argentine and the Temptress, one of those fascinating creatures that Ibanez creates in perfection.

The War Correspondent in Role of Poet

Paul Scott Mowrer proves himself a poet of fancies and elusive imaginings in The Good Comrade and Fairies, a daintily beautiful book just published by the Duttons. Lovely, fascinating lyrics into which, with a light and delicate touch, he has infused the very spirit of elfish wild things fill most of the volume. But there are also songs of human beings and of human relationships and comradely feeling that bring it more within the circle of every day life. Yet even these have something of the thistle-light and almost eerie touch of the others. The little book is a contribution of real poetic value to contemporary American verse. It is the author's second book of verse, the first, published during the war, bearing the title, Hours of France. Mr. Mowrer is better known as newspaper correspondent and author of books of travel and discussion. His Balkanized Europe, which the Dutton published two years ago, gave the best of all accounts, of the conditions in central Europe during the years immediately following the war.

Mrs. Harriman Tells Story of the "400."

Mrs. J. Borden Harriman has observed the American parade from a front row seat. She has seen as much of American life and affairs of state in this country as Margot Asquith ever saw in England. Of recent years her home in Washington has been one of the social centers around which politics has revolved. Henry Holt and Co. are therefore happy to announce her memoirs for fall publication.

Mrs. Harriman, nee Hurst, was a debutante in those days when the Knickerbocker Dudes would dash in from Long Island to balls at Delmonico's, sometimes dressing in closed carriages on the way. She was a young society matron in the days when Mrs. William Astor made up the list of 400, sternly crossing off all divorcees; when Stanford White was the moving spirit of the costume balls. A little later, with Mrs. J. J. Astor, Anne Morgan, Mrs. Payne Whitney, and a few others, she founded the Colony club, and built the first woman's social club-house, while most men scoffed and accused the women of wanting it merely as an address for clandestine letters!

From the Colony club, her interests spread to politics and woman's suffrage. She gives a vivid sketch of her first dinner at the white house with Roosevelt, when he turned in a twinkling from the discussion of social welfare to a new suit for African hunters which had just arrived; he donned it immediately and went whooping it up through the halls of the white house, unmindful of his guests.

The rest of the book deals largely with Mrs. Harriman's life in Washington, Paris, and London during and after the war. An active member on the industrial relations commission, she came to be closely identified with the war administration, and has much of interest to tell about Woodrow Wilson, William , Jennings Bryan, Tumulty George Creel, Gen. Pershing, Dr. Finley, and many other figures of nat onal importance.

Hansen New Harper's Book Editor

Harry Hansen, literary editor of the Chicago Daily News, will conduct a book review department in Harper's Magazine beginning with the August issue. In the conduct of this department, Mr. Hansen will have an absolutely free hand in the selection of the books for review from the lists of the various publishers, and no restrictions will be laid upon his method of critical treatment. No books from the list of Harper & Brothers will be reviewed in this department. Mr. Hansen has been writing for the Chicago Daily News for ten years. He began as a reporter soon after he was graduated from the University of Chicago. In 1914, he was appointed Berlin correspondent and arrived there shortly before the war broke out. He "covered" the peace conference for his newspaper in 1918. He is the author of A Peace Congress of Intrigue and The Adventures of the Fourteen Points; also a book on the activities of the west, called Midwest Portraits which Harcourt Brace & Co. will publish in the fall. Mr. Hansen has made for himself an enviable position in the field of literary criticism.

JIM THE PENMAN

Letters of James Gibbons Huneker, collected and edited by Josephine Huneker New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. ($3.50.)

A young writing man or woman can learn a lot from these letters written by James Gibbons Huneker,—"Jim the Penman," as he was wont to style himself,—to his friends and literary associates. Perhaps the outstanding lesson is that the youthful writer who is tempted into the bypaths of journalism and who cherishes hopes of making a fortune with his typewriter should break away from the newspaper byways toot sweet, and hurry to the offices of the nearest advertising agency.

From back in the eighties through the first twenty years of this century, Huneker served editors and public as a journalist. He was a special kind of journalist, to be sure,—a critical observer, an interpreter of the arts; he was also a short-story writer, essayist and biographer; but essentially, a newspaper man. And all the time he was writing for his living, while he was acquiring fame and after he had acquired it. Like most newspaper men, he never made much more than that; his pen had to keep moving to buy bread and butter and Pilsener beer.

"Salt your boodle, Bill!" he postscripts in a letter to Rupert Hughes. The advice was given flippantly enough, perhaps; but the record of Huneker's years of writing toil shows that it came from a store of poignant experience.

You can pick up this volume and dip into it here and there, enjoying the spicy Hunekerisms to be found on every page; or you can pursue a more orderly course, reading the letters through from the first one, written in January, 1886, to Alfred Barili, Adelina Patti's nephew, to the last one, written in January, 1921, to Jules Bois. Either the casual reading or the more intensive perusal will give you the conversational grace that was peculiarly Huneker's. "I find a conversational tone in writing—as in telephoning—carries further than shouting," he writes to Benjamin de Casseres. But the casual dipping into the letters will cheat you of Huneker's life, story, that a reading from start to finish gives you.

It is a life story with omissions, of course, but it tells the tale of Jim Huneker, penman, in a faithful way that no biographer could achieve.

A biographer might dwell on Huneker's cosmopolitanism. Huneker himself sheds light on the subject thus, after Europe has become familiar ground to him: "I loathe Paris to live in—unless one has steam heat and running water. I have become materialistic. I wouldn't live in the Latin Quarter with its dirt, genius, squalor and gayety for the price of a house. One, when you are very young—then is Paris a fairy dream in its settings. But don't peep behind the scenes."

Again, he writes from London in 1913: "I'm sick of noises, sick of foreign tongues, sick of strange faces, sick of cosmopolitanism—galling admission. I had rather be a fried oyster in Philadelphia than the Lord Mayor of London."

He drew, in the course of these letters, various pen portraits of himself. "A newspaper man in a hell of a hurry writing journalese," he designates himself, for the eye of Henry Mencken.

"I loathe sloppy humanitarianism," he writes in another letter, "and prefer an army of Nietzsches to a slobbering altruist."

Huneker's international view of things artistic, music, the stage, literature and painting, makes his letters something more than friendly chat or chronicle. It makes them vehicles for his artistic beliefs. Of novelists, for instance, he writes: "Besides, where is his like today, Joseph Conrad! And to think in my puerile fatuity (my intellest is very callow) I spoke of Conrad as being in the company of Meredith, James, Hardy! What I should have said is: 'J. C. makes the fifth of a quintette of the world's greatest writers of fiction: Flaubert, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoievski.'"

Writing in 1907 about the French impressionists, before Cezanne and the others were known to more than a few on this side of the Atlantic, he put his feeling about Cezanne into words: Nevertheless, Czeanne is a great painter—purely as a painter, one who seizes and expresses actuality. This same actuality is always terrifyingly ugly (fancy waking up at night and discovering one of his females on the pillow next to you!) There is the ugly in life as well as the pretty, and for artistic purposes it is often more significant and characteristi But—ugly as Cezanne. He could paint a bad breath."

In spite of the fact that the volume is not a small one and would not fit easily into a spare corner of the summer luggage, the Huneker letters would make the best sort of reading for vacation leisure. You could amuse yourself with them in hot weather; and, in cooler weather, when you do your heavier thinking, you could ponder over their wisdom in memory.

M. N. G.

Adler to Explore Thibet and Punjab

Thibet and the Punjab are the next objectives of W. F. Alder, author of The Isle of Vanishing Men and Men of the Inner Jungle. In the first book he tells of the natives of New Guinea and in the second of the savages of Borneo. He sails in November to be gone as is his custom, into the interior for months. All he needs for one of these long visits among the twilight peoples is a supply of money, his trusty outfit, one companion and Bad. Bad is his cook—so called, Mr. Adler declares, because his full name is Badock and because he was at first probably the worst cook in the world, though now he has improved slightly. Still, Bad is always worth much, for whatever happens—and many things at least irritating happen in the jungle—he is reliable and never loses his cheerfulness. Bad is now on vacation in his native Mocassar home and a cable says Mr. Adler will start him to any rendezvous;—whatever the rendezvous, declares Mr. Adler, he will be there.

A New Novel By Maud Diver

Once again Maud Diver has turned to India for the scene of a novel, in Lonely Furrow, just published by Houghton-Mifflin Co. The title has a three-fold application, to loneliness in temperament, to loneliness in marriage, and to the essential loneliness of each individual soul on this planet.

Mrs. Diver, who is the wife of a colonel in the British army and the daughter of another, was born in the Himalayas, and lived in India and Ceylon during the most receptive years of her life. She has traveled the whole length of India, from the Deccan teeming with human life, to the solitude of the vast white mountains of the farthest north. Although she had long been accustomed to amusing herself by scribbling verses and prose, it was not until she had the problem of a son to educate that she attempted to find a commercial outlet for her work.

Almost instantly, however, upon publication, her stories of India commanded considerable attention, and each succeeding volume has increased her reputation for verity, beauty and power to delineate human hearts and emotions.

WORDS OF WISE MEN.

How much pain the evils have cost us that have never happened.

All is but lip wisdom that wanteth experience.