

THE
BOOKMAN

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JULY, 1946

Book Society List for July

Selection Committee: EDMUND BLUNDEN, DANIEL GEORGE,
SYLVIA LYND, COMPTON MACKENZIE, J. B. PRIESTLEY

JULY SELECTED BOOK, *reviewed last month*

MAN-EATERS OF KUMAON *by* Jim Corbett 10/6

FICTION

LORD HORNBLOWER	<i>by</i> C. S. Forester	9/6
THE GASCON	<i>by</i> J. B. Morton	8/6
TWO SOLITUDES	<i>by</i> Hugh MacInnan	10/6
MISS RANSKILL COMES HOME	<i>by</i> Barbara Bower	8/6
POOR MAN'S TAPESTRY	<i>by</i> Oliver Onions	10/6
THREE O'CLOCK DINNER	<i>by</i> Josephine Pinckney	10/6
COMPASSIONATE ADVENTURE	<i>by</i> Josephine Bell	10/6

BIOGRAPHY

THE MERRY WIVES OF WESTMINSTER	<i>by</i> Mrs. Belloc Lowndes	12/6
<i>With 4 half-tone illustrations</i>		
THE TROLLOPES	<i>by</i> L. P. and R. P. Stebbins	18-
<i>With 4 full-page portraits in half-tone</i>		

HISTORY AND AFFAIRS

THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA	<i>by</i> Harold Nicolson	18-
<i>With 8 full-page portraits in half-tone</i>		
FRENCH PERSONALITIES AND PROBLEMS	<i>by</i> D. W. Brogan	10/6

COUNTRYSIDE

COUNTRY THINGS	<i>by</i> Alison Uttley	6-
<i>With many line drawings</i>		
THE ROAD OF A NATURALIST	<i>by</i> Donald Culross Peattie	12/6
<i>With many woodcut illustrations</i>		

These books, or any others, can be obtained from THE BOOK SOCIETY,
13, Grosvenor Place, Hyde Park Corner, London, S.W.1. 'Phone : Sloane 6178

For issue August 19

AUGUST BOOK

Reviewed on page 1

BRITANNIA MEWS *a novel by* MARGERY SHARP 10/6

POETS AND POETRY

THANKS BEFORE GOING

by John Masefield (*Heinemann*, 7/6).

COLLECTED LYRICAL POEMS

by Vivian Locke Ellis (*Faber*, 7/6).

THE SAND CASTLE

by C. C. Abbott (*Cape*, 3/6).

BEOWULF

by Gavin Bone (*Blackwell*, 15/-).

THE VOYAGE AND OTHER POEMS

by Edwin Muir (*Faber*, 6/-).

A MAP OF VERONA

by Henry Reed (*Cape*, 3/6).

POEMS

by Jonathan Wilson (*Cape*, 3/6).

THIS WAY TO THE TOMB

by Ronald Duncan (*Faber*, 6/-).

PETER GRIMES AND OTHER POEMS

by Montagu Slater (*Bodley Head*, 7/6).

OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS

by Norman Nicholson (*Faber*, 6/-).

THE genius of D. G. Rossetti in poetry is honoured by the Poet Laureate in a kind of handbook to Rossetti's poems, which is entitled *Thanks Before Going*. One by one these compositions receive comments appreciative, explanatory or personal. It may come as a surprise to some readers that John Masefield has so long felt a peculiar admiration for this great Victorian, but the recollection of his own sonnets may show how appropriate it is.

Another tribute from poet to poet graces Mr. Locke Ellis's *Collected Lyrical Poems*. Mr.

de la Mare says in the course of it: 'As with a starry night, a first acquaintance with a collection of poems will discover only the major constellations. Watch, and the lesser lights, the little solitaries will reveal themselves.' Mr. Ellis's collection calls for this attentiveness.

Mr. Collier Abbott's poems have always been a little out of the prevailing style; he has written frequently, for example, on country topics, but always with an element of strangeness and of rhythmical force which removed his work from the idyllic class. He has *thew* and *sinew* in his verse, and a sharpness of light and shade in his pictorial impressions.

I found a quality like his, in some degree, in Gavin Bone's translation of the old wonder-book of *Beowulf* now published with his essay upon the original and his illustrations in colour. This version will be valued by those who have not much Anglo-Saxon.

Another ancient epic sounds on through the first poem in Mr. Edwin Muir's new book.

*Reading the wall of Troy
Ten years without a change
Was such intense employ
(Just out of arrow's range)
All the world was strange
After ten years of Troy.*

Mr. Muir has long since made

his mark as a poet of the intellectual imagination. For a brief instance of his way of showing life in a single figure I would mention 'The Window' among his latest poems—the fulfilment of a transient fancy.

A group of poems entitled 'Lessons of the War' strikes me as being the most expressive part of Mr. Henry Reed's book. He also has his poems on subjects of ancient fame, such as 'Philoctetes,' but they do not announce his originality so boldly as the pieces mentioned, which have captured something of the time-spirit and ambiguity of the recent war in a style of wit and deep feeling united.

The company of young poets who gave their lives in the war includes Jonathan Wilson; he had not completed his 21st year. Nature's inspiration through the seasons meant much to him, and in such a poem as 'On the Windy Top' he drew from his observation a means of symbolising human affairs:—

*I see life like the journey of shaggy rook
Against an October gale, ploughing his
way*

*Towards his windy tree-top home: Look
How he cannot make an advance as yet!
He is driven back by the gale's Atlantic
wet.*

*But weary with travelling he arrives at
length*

*Where he may rest safe in the tree-top's
sway.*

The endeavours of younger

poets to write drama worthy of the high tradition have continued: and Mr. Ronald Duncan's name is known to many who have perhaps had no chance to know his verse in general. *This Way to the Tomb* tells best in performance, but its diction, metre, invention and irony make it a notable reading play.

Mr. Montagu Slater's *Peter Grimes* has already had its public acclamation. It appears now with other dramatic episodes, and they contain much curious thinking. The poet seems to get free in such lines as these in his 'National Gallery':—

*This is a curious house. Spiritual
counties range*

*Rival aesthetics. Bedford's moated
grange,*

*Stripped trees of Wales and conscious
ancientry,*

*And Surrey's worldliness, and Kentish
melancholy,*

*In what rich compromise can these agree?
And down another passage dead moons
stare*

*Between the windmill sails of muddy
Yare.*

Prologue and Epilogue to Mr. Norman Nicholson's play are entrusted to a bird not unused to poetical occasions—The Raven. In the mountains too, while the echoes of the Old Testament join the talk of the peasantry, the 'voices of the beck' are heard. It is an imaginative symphony throughout.

EDMUND BLUNDEN