

The rest of the *Journal Book*, which is the *raison d'être* of Miss Armes' massive volume, is filled with pictures of social and domestic life in the days which charm us by their seeming serenity, but which must often have been empty and dull. Dull certainly for young Mrs. Livingston who loved frivolity and could not get enough of it; who hated the country which grew "more disagreeable" to her every day she lived in it; who tried hard to read Blair's "excellent sermons"; and who wept copiously over the *Sorrows of Werther*. "There is luxury in some kinds of grief," she remarks with unwonted sapience. Always in the offing is the good-looking Comte de Mosloy who would gladly have espoused his early love had she been free; but who filled up his time by marrying two other women, who made him reasonably happy.

We have no doubt that life today is too crowded, too noisy, too assertive, too pre-tentious in matters of the intellect, too combative about material things. Standards are lowered year by year to meet the demands of mediocrity. Yet out of this welter emerges clear and plain an effort to aid the uneasy human beings who know only that things go wrong. We are all pushing harder than is seemly, but perhaps we push to some purpose. The *Sorrows of Werther* echoed "the dim-rooted pain of thinking men"—hard to heal, but comparatively easy to forget.



Briefer Mention

FICTION

JOURNEY INTO FREEDOM.

By Klaus Mann. Translated by Rita Reil. Knopf
\$2.50 5 x 8; 296 pp. New York

The Great Purge of the Nazi regime may yet provide the catharsis of great literature. Al-

though Klaus Mann's novel is not an authentic masterpiece, it has elements of nobility and emotional splendor. The author is as yet somewhat immature, he is occasionally too prodigal of irrelevant material, but if he lacks the ultimate detachment and spiritual serenity which are the stuff of world-tragedy, his book is nevertheless genuinely moving in its presentation of the immediate personal tragedy of Joan, the young, "not entirely Aryan" German girl who dedicates her life to her fellow-exiles for the Cause after an interlude of idyllic passion during a summer in Finland. The peculiar beauty of that Northern landscape—the shimmering birches, the golden moor-water, the silver-white Baltic nights—is given poetic significance. As all the world probably knows by this time, Klaus Mann is the son of Thomas Mann, but it is unnecessary to compare his work with that of his Olympian parent in saying that he has written a book of considerable power and promise.



PERISH IN THEIR PRIDE.

By Henry de Montherlant. Knopf
\$2.50 5 x 8; 275 pp. New York

Far from perishing, the poor and degenerate but still proud characters of M. de Montherlant's novel leap into three-dimensional life through the medium of Thomas McGreevy's flexible translation, which apparently has preserved all the wit, gaiety, and Gallic malice of the distinguished Frenchman's work. De Montherlant is the *enfant terrible* of the Faubourg St. Germain, for, unlike Proust, an outsider and social opportunist, he belongs root and branch to that diminishing, obscure, and dingy group of old regime aristocrats whose inadequacy he presents with such ironic finality. Pitiful and absurd anachronisms like the "Count de Coantre," whose linen was dirty but invariably marked with a coronet, are made dynamic in their vacuity by the vigor of his art, a vitality the more notable in contrast to the anemia which has overcome so much contemporary French fiction. In this tragedy of futility, it is stimulating to find that the author has amply fulfilled the promise of such early work as *The Bullfighters*, that brilliant crystallization of his own adolescent experience as an amateur of the bull-ring. *Perish in Their Pride* received a prize from the French Academy, and also the Heine-mann literary award.

THE BALCONY.

By Adrian Bell. *Simon and Shuster*
\$2.50 5 x 7½; 248 pp. *New York*

In limpid prose, Adrian Bell has written one of those nostalgic stories of childhood which English men of letters so often find the congenial medium for their highest talents and most intimate self-expression. At times, the world is tempted to wonder whether the lives of adult Englishmen are so lacking in emotional and spiritual compensation for the joys of childhood that they should so frequently yearn for the particular Heaven which lies only about infancy. Let the reader, then, look at London through the iron grill of *The Balcony*, with the small boy of Mr. Bell's novel. In his search for lost times, the author has produced a fragile, though tenuous story of a child's emotional consciousness as it unfolds from babyhood to school days.

EXTRAVAGANZAS.

By Ronald Firbank. *Coward-McCann*
\$2 5 x 8; 204 pp. *New York*

There is little in Ronald Firbank's posthumous volume to support his admirers' conviction of a great loss to literature. The two stories included are *The Artificial Princess* and *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli*. Mr. Firbank's last work is precisely dated by his mah-jongg playing courtiers. Stylistic arabesques serve to veil triviality, but cannot mitigate the essential dullness of stories in which the weary shades of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley have been invoked once too often — as well as too late.

POETRY

THEORY OF FLIGHT.

By Muriel Rukeyser. *Yale University Press*
\$2 6½ x 9½; 86 pp. *New Haven*

Muriel Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight* is a strange and startling first volume. But it is more than merely startling; it has solid authority, an authority amazing in a girl of twenty-one. The strangeness comes from the almost total absence of derivations; except for an occasional echo of Auden, the author is already clear of those influences from which the young

poet attempts to free himself, usually in vain. Apart from the originality of tone, Miss Rukeyser has something vital to say. Her poetry is revolutionary in the best sense: it does not repeat the shibboleths of either poetry or politics; its thoughts and its symbols are definitely modern, but neither are used arbitrarily for modernistic effects. It is the very absence of straining to be effective which makes her work impressive. The title poem, with the airplane as its logical symbol of freedom, the moving three-part "The Lynchings of Jesus", and the apparently autobiographical "The Blood Is Justified" are, perhaps, the most arresting poems in this book, but the others are scarcely less notable. It is ironic to observe with what hot haste the critics have lately rushed to acclaim the emergence of three English poets and how few hats have been thrown in the air for a young American, whose first venture has not only more promise but more power than the combined first books of Spender, Auden, and Day Lewis.

AMY LOWELL.

By S. Foster Damon. *Houghton Mifflin*
\$5 6 x 9; 773 pp. *Boston*

Although Mr. Damon did not use all his material — could not, in fact, for he was dealing with one of the most voluminous figures of the period — this will probably be the definitive biography of Amy Lowell. It contains all the facts of her life, a complete record of her controversies and publications, which were staged with the thoroughness of a military campaign, and some of the more significant correspondence from and to her. One wishes that the book were a little less comprehensive and a little more critical; the volume would have been far more valuable had Mr. Damon curbed a few of his gasps of wonder, and checked, or at least reserved, the overstatements. But this, he might reply, is a chronicle and neither a critique nor an attempt at valuation. The autobiography which Amy Lowell might have written would have been far more self-revealing. Lacking that work, this is an immense labor and precious source material, whether one is more concerned with the poet or the theorist, or the personality that surpassed either.



THE CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL Y. ANDERSON (*Sad Death of a Hero*) has for many years been an able correspondent of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. At present, he is in charge of the Washington bureau of that newspaper.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT (*The Brotherhood of Orpheus*), the poet and critic, is a contributing editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*. His latest volume is *Golden Fleece, Poems and Ballads Old and New*, (Dodd, Mead).

EDWIN BORCHARD (*Circumstantial Evidence*) is a professor of law at Yale University, and the author of *Declaratory Judgments* and *Convicting the Innocent*, (Garden City).

ERNEST BOYD (*Report on Rugged Proletarianism*), one of the Republic's leading critics and men of letters, was born in Dublin in 1887. He has lived in New York City since 1920.

STRUTHERS BURT (*Is Patriotism Necessary?*), author, poet, and historian, was born in Baltimore in 1882. He now makes his home at Southern Pines, North Carolina. Mr. Burt's books include *The Delectable Mountains*, (Grosset) and *Festival*, (Scribner's).

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REUEL DENNEY (*A Boxer Called Panther*) was born in 1913 in New York City and was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1932. He has contributed verse to *Poetry* and other magazines.

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IRVING KOLODIN (*Recorded Music*) is a music critic on the staff of the *New York Sun*.

H. L. MENCKEN (*Three Years of Dr. Roosevelt*) was editor of THE MERCURY from its founding in 1924 to the close of 1933. He reappears in this issue for the first time as a contributor only. Since his retirement from the magazine, Mr. Mencken has given part of his time to travel, but most of it to a complete rewriting of *The American Language*, first published in 1919, and revised in 1921 and 1923. The new version, much larger and more comprehensive than any of its predecessors, is now on the press, and will be published shortly by Alfred A. Knopf.