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IT'S FUN KEEPING AN ANTHOLOGY

(Written for "The Listener" by N. P. WEBBER)

I GOT the idea of keeping an anthology when I was at High School—it started then with a scrappy exercise-book, but now it has grown until four notebooks are filled. Then there was another that I lost somewhere in the Western Desert between Alamein and Tripoli. Keeping an anthology has given a new interest to reading. So often one reads a book that delights with sudden rays of humour, arresting facts or statements, unforgettable then, but three weeks later forgotten except for the general idea.

Start collecting these extracts that interest or amuse you and the few minutes taken in writing them out will never be regretted. Months and years later, re-reading them will give endless pleasure: most items chuckled over then will give just as much amusement as now, though other extracts may leave you uninterested and give surprise that they were once considered diverting or of importance.

I am no highbrow, and, like Samuel Butler, cannot claim any great interest or enthusiasm for poetry. Most of my extracts are prose—at first just humour which appealed to me, but now I am adding more and more serious items. At one time I kept a notebook with me when I was reading and I jotted down any pieces I liked there and then, but now I just mark the page (by turning up the corner, I regret to say) and then, when the book is finished, I turn back and write out anything which still appeals. Perhaps only one extract is taken from four or five books. I think it is better, however, to lift a little rather than too much.

Together with this anthology, I keep a list of the books I have read—the name, the author and a few comments. If I have enjoyed the book I put the author on my reading list. If I read in a book that interests me, references or quotations from other books and authors, I make a note of them, too. Using this system I waste no time when I go to the library in idly looking around, and seldom read a book which bores me.

Hunting with Samuel Butler

Samuel Butler's books are a happy hunting ground for an anthologist, in fact they are so full of choice extracts that the only practical thing to do is to have all his books in your library and read and re-read them. His *Notebooks* are delightful. Here are just a few extracts—"Silence is not always tact, and it is tact that is golden, not silence." . . . "God is love—I dare say. But what a mischievous devil Love is." Or perhaps, if you are tired of pictures and the radio and playing cards, you might like to amuse yourself writing a story round one of his suggested topics, such as "The Complete Drunkard—he would not give his money to sober people, he said they would only eat it, and send their children to school with it." There are possibilities also in "The Battle of

the Prigs and Blackguards." A really delightful extract is one of Butler's rare pieces of verse called "The Two Deans," a discussion between the senior and junior Deans on Butler's apparent virtues when he was studying for the Church. It begins

JUNIOR DEAN:

Brother, I am much pleased with Samuel Butler.

I have observed him mightily of late, Methinks that in his melancholy walk And air subdued when e'er he meeteth me Lurks something more than in most other men.

After a long paean of praise, it ends on quite a different note, however, as



"The brosy odour of porridge"

"Enter Butler suddenly, without a coat or anything on his head, rushing through the cloisters, bearing a cup, a bottle of cider, four lemons, two nutmegs, half a pound of sugar and a nutmeg-grater. Curtain falls on the confusion of Butler and the horror-stricken dismay of the two Deans."

Quotations from Mansfield

There are a lot of quotations you will want from Katherine Mansfield. Like Butler's *Notebooks* her *Journal* is so delightful that there is only one satisfactory thing to do—put it in your library to read and read again. I love her equivalent of the nigger in the woodpile or the snake in the grass. . . . "the snail under the leaf." How do you like this? "Mid-day strikes on various bells—some velvety soft; some languid, some regretful, and one impatient—a youthful bell, ringing high and quick above the rest. He thought joyfully, that's the bell for me. . . ."

Eric Linklater has a great appeal and I think I have read all his published books to date. I have lots of quotations. Linklater has a racy colourful style that is always amusing. Surely you couldn't pass "He disappeared from the room like a cat going over Niagara," without reading it again. Or his soliloquy on "Yes" . . . "But 'Yes' that wasteful syllable, that running tap of a word will carry those who utter it as if on a pleasant stream, through rich and various country. It is a bridge that leaps over stagnation, a sky-sail to catch wind in the doldrums. It is a passport to adventure, birdlime for experience, a knife for the great oyster of the world and

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