

BOOK RECORD

Conducted by ANTAR

NO BOREDOM, PLEASE!

Autobiography and Political Survey
Answer Modern DemandsGUIDE-BOOKS OR
NOVELS?

BOOKS, more than any other artistic product, reflect the times in which they are written. To-day we are educated to require information with our reading; we are realistic enough to spurn the gilded novels and verse of our fathers; but we are still superficial enough to demand that at all costs we must not be bored. Hence the two neat, compact little volumes which I am going to recommend now.

In both cases the books can be read in an hour or so, they are reasonably well-written, and they do not require overmuch from the reader. Thus the volume entitled "... And Nothing Long" is the autobiography of a pleasant Englishman who in turn has been a bank-clerk, a tea-planter, an oil company official in Moscow, a British Vice-Consul, a Foreign Office expert, a reporter on "The Daily Express," a grocer, a garage proprietor, and the diplomatic correspondent of "The Morning Post."

He has some amusing stories of his late Victorian childhood in Kensington, some startling accounts of wartime intrigue in Baku; but perhaps he is most acceptable for his humorous, nonchalant attitude toward international upsets and private pitfalls. His

final recipe for happiness strikes home at us all: "So if you want to like life, like people. Some of us become disappointed in them; that, I usually find, is our own fault..."

I HAVE mentioned Mr. MacDonell first because really he is the most entertaining. Senor Vilaplana, ably translated by Mr. Horsfall Carter, the new editor of "The Fortnightly," describes his experiences in Nationalist Spain while he unwillingly held the position of Commissioner of Justice at fatal Burgos. It is an eminently readable but extremely harrowing record.

While Senor Vilaplana was originally partisan of neither side in Spain he has, like so many others, been forced into the Government camp by the sheer, brutal stupidity of the Nationalists. He reveals that, in the first place, a plot was hatching to overthrow the Republic long before Sotelo was killed. But this was not Fascist in origin.

It was essentially a revolt of the ruling classes with the army against the rising strength of Labour. Then a weak-willed, colourless Franco was made the tool of unscrupulous foreign interventionists.

The author's terse descriptions of shootings and burials of political opponents should be avoided by sadists, but the book as a whole makes easy, modern reading.

"... And Nothing Long," by Ranaid MacDonell. (Constable, London. Our copy from the publishers.)

"Burgos Justice," by Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana. (Constable, London. Our copy from the publishers.)

Book Of Metaphysics

A BOOK entitled "The Art of Living" has been compiled by Mr. Souster from lectures he gave recently over the air and in Wellington, and is now on sale.

It is the seventh of a series of works from the pen of this metaphysician, and contains information on the way to gain health and happiness by correct diet, breathing, exercise, etc. Three chapters are devoted to the causes and elimination of fear, which Mr. Souster holds is due to wrong teaching in sex matters. Although he does not attack Christianity, he aims at showing how certain Church teachings produce fear and illness.

Mr. Souster's books are widely read, and nearly 1000 copies have been bought by doctors and nurses. The new work is attractively produced and printed on good paper. The price is one shilling.

["The Art of Living," by Souster. Our copy from the author.]

WHEN I go abroad I expect I shall meekly purchase a guide-book like any other benighted wanderer and allow my interests to be ruled entirely by the printed page. On the other hand, I have not yet gone abroad—do not hope to do so for a time yet—and, therefore, I would be very much obliged to sundry so-called novelists of the present day if they would refrain from giving me large chunks of guide-books in the midst of the writings I had vainly prayed would entertain me.

This vogue for using luxury cruises as the setting for romantic adventures is one of the most tedious I have yet encountered in literature. From the point of view of the authors, it may be a convenient trick to create exotic atmosphere, but believe me, pen-scratchers, it doesn't work with readers!

This week, to my sorrow, I have read two of these guide-book romances—Nora K. Strange's "Miss Wiston Goes Gay" and Josephine Kamm's "Disorderly Caravan." In the first I was taken to Portugal, in the second to the Mediterranean. Both forced me into visiting historic sights, pottering among old ruins and philosophising about the peasants. Neither for one moment persuaded me I was or wanted to be anywhere but in a small draughty living-room in Wellington.

They were those sorts of books—prosy, narrow-minded, snobbishly travel-conscious. Of the two, "Miss Wiston Goes Gay" catches the reflected charm from its heroine, the kindly, middle-aged spinster who went to Portugal to find that "fun at forty-five" was possible after all. From the first, she wins and holds sympathy, redeeming the book, despite its guide-tracts.

But the heroine of Josephine Kamm's novel is stupid and conventional. When she meets an insipid schoolmaster on the way to Greece it is inevitable she will fall in love with him—equally inevitable that neither of them will ever depart from the narrowest of straight paths.

Indeed, chief interest of "Disorderly Caravan" is the shrewd caricatures of the tourists—the type of people who have so much money they can go on luxury cruises without experiencing even the thrill of novelty.

"Miss Wiston Goes Gay" may help to drive off boredom on a wet Sunday afternoon, but "Disorderly Caravan" is too footling even to fill in time.

"Miss Wiston Goes Gay," by Nora K. Strange (Hutchinson, London). Our copy from the publishers.

"Disorderly Caravan," by Josephine Kamm. (Harrap, London). Our copy from the publishers.



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