

CURRENT literary trends are difficult often to evaluate. They are especially so in postwar Britain, where the publication of books is still delayed from season to season on account of publishing difficulties and where editions are exhausted practically before the blurb is dry on the book jacket. The reader does not exactly have to give up ration points for his books, but booksellers are restricted in the number of copies each receives, as the author found to her dismay this summer. A leading London bookstore could only supply two out of a list of 10 recent publications. In Shropshire, the owner of the local bookshop pulled a wry face, on being asked for a copy of Margaret Lane's popular biography, "The Tale of Beatrice Potter." "Our quota was one," he said sadly, "and that was mislaid in the mail."

This is indeed a sorry plight resulting from wartime conditions and difficulties which Mr. Geoffrey Faber, past president of the Publishers' Association, sums up very succinctly in his recent article on the "Ups and Downs of Publishing":

"The years 1941-1946 have seen quite a staggering reversal in the conditions of book publishing. They have, indeed, been years of chaos, losses, burnings, nightmare efforts to supply some reasonable fraction of the actual, but nevertheless, nearly unbelievable demand. Publishers have had to do the impossible—to make bricks without straw (though straw has, in fact, been a main ingredient of wartime paper) and to warehouse and distribute books without trained labor. These years have, nevertheless, been years of a prosperity such as the English book trade has never previously even dreamed of. All is not well with the trade in spite of these years of prosperity. Taxation has taken the whole of its wartime profits. Nothing has gone into reserve. In 1946, the publishing industry finds itself stripped bare. Nobody has any stocks now. Millions of books (and many tons of type) have been destroyed by enemy action. The rest have been sold and very few of this will or can be reprinted."

Great Demand for American Books

Not only has the demand of the reading public in Britain itself exceeded the supply. There has also been a notable increase in the demand for British books from other countries. The largest has come from the United States and it has been a source of great disappointment that these orders could not be filled.

The following table quickly indicates the comparison in British book output in 1939 and 1945:

	1939	1945
Total published	14,904	6,717
Of these:		
Educational	1,350	112
Biography and memoirs	689	216
Children's	1,303	715
History	387	135
Fiction	4,222	1,216

Out of the war, too, came demands for certain types of literary output. Although the interest in war books has waned, dispatches and reports in fields hitherto treated as confidential, are beginning to make their appearance. His majesty's stationery office, which in 1942 had suddenly found itself with a best-seller on its hands—"Front Line, 1940-1: The Official Story of the Civil Defense of Britain," sold over 2,000,000 copies—has just issued "The Battle of the Atlantic"—the official report of Capt. H. T. Doring on submarine warfare and the loss of Allied shipping. The entire first edition of 100,000, at

Books in Great Britain

By Gwendolyn M. Kidd

Librarian, British Information Services, British Embassy, Washington, D. C.

30 cents a copy, sold out in four days.

Service people returning to seek new civilian occupations or to brush up on old ones were interested in a wide variety of technical books dealing with professions and trades.

Revival of Interest In National Achievement

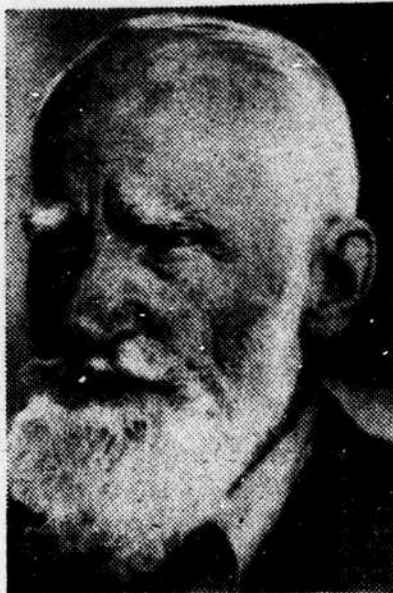
Out of the days of the war when Britain was fighting with her back to the wall there grew a great revival of pride and interest in national achievement in all phases and periods of British life. One of the most important series resulting from this is "Britain in Pictures," published by William Collins under the general editorship of W. J. Turner. These books all have distinctive covers and contain excellent color and black-and-white reproductions of paintings, prints and photographs. They are written by experts in their various fields and cover a very wide range. The 1946 titles included the national sport "English Cricket" and the variable subject "British Weather."

Inexpensive book production of a high quality is another feature of this period. The scarcity of materials and the imminent possibility of loss both of property and life, placed an added emphasis on the importance of things being done well. This fact is brought out in the "British Book Design 1946" exhibit held at the New York Public Library in November, under the auspices of the National Book Council and the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Fifty-nine books were chosen from a total of 562 submitted by 91 publishers. They were chosen as good examples of design and manufacture, taking into consideration qualities of illustration, typography, machinery, paper, binding and value in relation to price. They were not chosen for their literary content, although their contents also frequently caught and held the attention at the exhibition.

Inexpensive Books Follow New Trend

Among the new ventures of the year are the group of periodical books—"Contact," "Fortune," "The Arts," "Art and Image" and "Polemic." "Contact," which bears a resemblance to "Fortune" and the smaller volume, "Future," both cover politics, industry, science and the arts. "Alphabet and Image" deals mainly with the printing industry and "Polemic" with philosophy, psychology and esthetics. "The Arts" is reminiscent of the French "Verve."

The selection of titles from various classifications in the 1946 crop of publications has been made not only from the point of view of popularity in Britain but also from that of availability in the States—either in the English or American editions.



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW. "Twenty-six of his friends decided to celebrate his 90th birthday with a written token of their respect and affection." —AP Photo.

HISTORY

In this era of conferences and assemblies, Harold Nicolson's "Congress of Vienna—A Study of Allied Unity, 1812-1822" is being eagerly read and comparisons inevitably being made, although Mr. Nicolson endeavors to warn that "history can teach us little unless we first realize that she does not, in fact, repeat herself."

Also in the history field, but of a considerably earlier period, is Edith Sitwell's colorful, dramatic "Fanfare for Elizabeth." The Princess Elizabeth may be the ostensible subject, but the figures which dominate the scene are Henry VIII and her wretched mother—Ann Boleyn.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

From history, one turns to foreign affairs. Ambassadors write of their experiences in two parts of the world. Sir Robert Craigie, in "Behind the Japanese Mask," portrays from the Embassy the picture of Japan, 1937-1942, her leading personalities, the rise and fall of ministries and the events which determined Japan's entry into the war. In "Ambassador on Special Mission," Sir Samuel Hoare (Viscount Templewood) writes of his work in Madrid as British Ambassador from 1940 to 1944 and of the endeavors which contributed largely to the Spanish refusal to enter the war on the side of the Axis.

BIOGRAPHY

A recent contribution to biography is Trevor Evans' "Bevin: Profile of a Leader," the first publication of the sort on this forceful figure in the international affairs of today.

George Bernard Shaw does not like birthdays. In fact he swore 20 years ago that he would never celebrate another. However, 26 of his friends decided to celebrate on his 90th birthday with a written token of their re-

spect and affection: "G. B. S. 90."

"The Scarlet Tree," the second volume of Sir Osbert Sitwell's autobiography, "Lefthand, Right-hand," is a period piece of Victorian and Edwardian London and county life. The English edition contains reproductions of paintings of Renishaw executed by John Piper.

SATIRE

In the satirical group, George Orwell's fable "Animal Farm," amusing and with an easy diverting style has given food for both comment and argument.

Cyril Connolly, the editor of "Horizon" and author of the "Unquiet Grave" has recently published his "Condemned Playground: Essays 1927-1944."

POETRY

The poetic harvest has been a slim one. Two women already well known for their creative ability are represented. The collection of Edith Sitwell, "Song of the Cold," contains most of her verse written since the beginning of World War II and establishes beyond question the contention of her admirers that she must rank among the first of the 20th-century lyric poets.

Nineteen years ago, Vita Sackville-West brought out her long poem "The Land" of the seasons' year in the Kentish fields. Her present volume is a gardener's year written against the background of war. "Small pleasures must correct great tragedies. Therefore of gardens in the midst of war I boldly tell."

FINE ARTS

For the fine arts, two inexpensive but well-designed books which have given much pleasure, have been chosen. Noel Carrington's work "Popular Art in Britain" contains robust illustrations in color, lithography, nearly all drawn from life.

Ralph Tubbs, already well known for his previous "Living in Cities," has done an excellent job in "The Englishman Builds" of illustrating how the spirit of an age is reflected in its architecture, art and crafts.

FICTION

Volumes of fiction are many. Three have been chosen; the first for its narrative, the second and third for their atmosphere.

"That Lady," or in its infinitely more attractive title, "For One Sweet Grape," by Kate O'Brien, is a historical novel of the Princess of Eboli, Ana de Mendoza, wife of Ruy Gomez, the friend and councillor of Philip II of Spain in his youth. It is a story, poignant in its sufferings and its loyalties, that stays in the mind.

For those to whom the death of Virginia Woolf came as a great shock and loss, there is Rumer Godden. Her two latest novels, "Thus Far and No Farther" and "The River," are both tales of British family life in India, told with great perception, delicacy and deftness.

The realm of short stories includes Rosamund Lehman's "The Gypsy's Baby,"—five long-short stories. As in her most recent novel, "The Ballad and the Sources," she continues her art of telling a story primarily for the sake of interpreting the effect of events upon a particular witness.

Elizabeth Bowen with her close literary kinship to Henry James, has written "Ivy Grippes the Steps"—English title, "The Demon Lover"—a series of stories written in wartime London with a preface brilliant in its awareness of the atmosphere of the period.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

British and American children for several decades have considered as their special friends and acquaintances, Beatrice Potter's "Peter Rabbit," "Jemima Puddle-duck," "Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle," "Jeremy Fisher" and "Tabitha Twitchit." Miss Potter was very definite in her ideas of what a small child's book should be—"very small itself, little more than five inches by four, with only one or two simple sentences on each page and a picture every time one turned over." Further editions have been required this year with the publication of "The Tale of Beatrix Potter," by Margaret Lane.

People brought up with Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, are beginning to discover with delight "Rhymes Without Reason"—a feast of poetic nonsense with beautiful nonsensical illustrations by Mervyn Peake, painter, illustrator and poet. In fact, one of his verses aptly summarizes the present topsy-turvy situation in the British book field, where the demand has run away with supply:

"... What a day it's been!
The kind of day when days
Are not what they are meant to be
In several kinds of ways."

The distinguished new teen-age novel by
ALTA HALVERSON SEYMOUR
author of ON THE EDGE OF THE FJORD

THE Tangled Skein



The evils of Nazi influence still linger in the little Norwegian village of Helsing, while its people rebuild their lives after the havoc of war. Were Solveig's brother and grandmother in league with the Germans? Are they still working for them? In the face of the contempt of neighbors who used to be her friends, she determines to find out the truth for herself. Just published, \$2.00

THE SECRET OF ALLENBY ACRES



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