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<th><strong>Title:</strong></th>
<th>The Engineers' Bookshelf</th>
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<td>Dumble, Wilson R.</td>
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Short Stories

Despite the war, publishers are still running from their presses numerous collections of plays and essays and short stories, all making a bid for the college trade which seems, from time to time, to be threatened by various “manpower officials” in Washington. When I grow discouraged and wonder if we really will have any students to teach in the class rooms during the months between the present day and some distant future date, I always turn to the new lists of books which publishers are sending me and feel that probably, after a fashion, classes will continue to function.

One of the most interesting collections of short stories that have come to my desk, arrived last November; it is known as The Pocket Book of Short Stories. Its price is only twenty-five cents and its number of pages reaches 440. It contains twenty-three complete short stories from American, British, and Continental writers. Besides, there is a splendid introduction to the study of the short story, one well worth reading. It is as splendid and compact a little volume as any that one would want, and it fits handily into a coat pocket.

Six of the stories can be included among the universal favorites in any college class room. For example, the first story in it is Hemingway’s “The Killers”, that bloodless little bit of narrative taking place in Henry’s lunchroom. Its dialogue is the very kind that made Mr. Hemingway famous, and its action moves to the tragic end, leaving Ole Anderson tossing on his bed in Mrs. Hirsch’s rooming house.

Another splendid piece of writing in this volume is Miss Dorothy Parker’s “Big Blonde.” “Big Blonde” won fame for Miss Parker in the days before she became noticed as a writer of the short narrative. Its dialogue is the very kind that made Mr. Hemingway famous, and its action moves to the tragic end, leaving Ole Anderson tossing on his bed in Mrs. Hirsch’s rooming house.

Included also in the collection is Miss Willa S. Cather’s “Paul’s Case.” This is one of Miss Cather’s very early stories, written while she was still doing newspaper work in Pittsburgh. It really brought her to the attention of Mr. Frank Munsey, editor of the late Munsey Magazine. Mr. Munsey encouraged Miss Cather, and helped her to publish her works in years to follow. The story of Paul is the story of tragic youth who sees the glitter and dazzle of wealth, deliberately steals a considerable sum of money, and goes to New York to live life to the hilt while the money lasts. With the technique of an experienced writer, Miss Cather draws her narrative to a close along the shining steel of railway tracks outside Newark, N. J., with the loss of young red blood in pure white snow. “Paul’s Case” is an unforgettable story.

In the collection is also placed my favorite of all short stories, W. Somerset Maugham’s “Rain.” Students refer to “Rain” time and again. “Yes,” they say; “yes, So-and-So is a good short story, but it is not as good as “Rain”. Frequently I am prone to agree. The story of Sadie Thompson, driven from a bawdy house in San Francisco into the arms of an American missionary at Pago Pago in the South Sea Isles makes one of the masterful short stories of all times, in all languages. Rev. and Mrs. Davidson, Dr. and Mrs. Macphail, and Miss Thompson are real flesh and blood people, whose actions and dialogues and philosophies are so expertly manipulated that they seem to live and breathe on the printed page. Only Mr. Maugham could have written such a story, and only such a story as “Rain” could have been effectively written in the 1920’s.

The reading joy that can be had from this little collection of short stories is nothing short of amazing, and I am always referring students not only to the few stories that I have mentioned above but also to others included in it.
by Frenchmen as I have in London shops by Brit-
ishers; yet I am not expecting to judge all French-
men by one or two such experiences. Nor would I
judge the Britishers by such experiences. I never
recall being short changed by a Britisher. I have
vivid recollection of attempts to short change me on
the trams in Paris. But, I do not dislike the French
as a people for something that one of their nation-
ality tried to do to me on a tram in a Paris street.
Mr. Maugham is assuming something that is not true.

Of Human Bondage

Speaking of Mr. Maugham, let me say that for
more than ten years I have been teaching his great
novel, "Of Human Bondage", to various classes, and
that each time I use it I discover something new in
it. It is a novel that can promote the most violent
discussions in class; each student has his own reaction
to the story and in some way he can prove the point
in question.

Let me quote the last paragraph from a review of
the novel written for me last Autumn Quarter by a
student who read the book for the first time:
"Of Human Bondage" will, I believe, live for a
long time to come, because the characters in it are
real live beings. There is the quality about them
that recalls to our minds the people that we know;
and Philip's search for an answer to the meaning of
life is, after all, the search of each and every one
of us."

From still another student, let me quote this last
paragraph of his review of "Of Human Bondage":
"The novel is imbued with a grimly realistic set-
ing and stirring sequence of events. The story is
packed with surging human emotions; it presents a
vivid picture of the successes and failures, the loves
and hates, joys and sorrows, the squalor, suffering,
misery, and death so common to the poverty stricken
masses of the time. Against this background, Philip
Carey fights his way to achieve ultimate success and
happiness."