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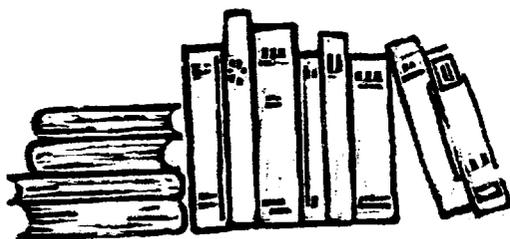
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The Engineers' Bookshelf

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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. If I recall correctly it won her a prize, which, of course, has nothing to do with the plot of a reckless young female who tries everything once, and ends up rather disastrously.

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.

Satevepost

Speaking of Mr. Maugham, let me call your attention to an article that he published in April 11 Saturday Evening Post. It is entitled "Why D'you Dislike Us?" Taking the fact for granted that Americans dislike the British, Mr. Maugham in his clear and lucid style proceeds to tell us why we dislike them. He claims to know that Americans do dislike the British, and he relates, bearing out this fact, little stories from the pens of Clifton Fadiman, H. L. Mencken, Louis Bromfield, and others.

I think that Mr. Maugham has bitten off quite a chunk when he wrote and published this article. I personally see no reason why we as Americans should not care for the British less than we should care for the French, or the Swiss, or any other one nationality. In Parisian shops I have been as graciously insulted

by Frenchmen as I have in London shops by Britishers; yet I am not expecting to judge all Frenchmen 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 nationality 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 setting 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."
