

Life in a Literary Family Described by the Author of Dodo

Family Affairs of the Bensons

A Charming Biographical Sketch of an Intellectual Fireside

OUR FAMILY AFFAIRS: 1897-1898. By E. F. Benson. Published by the George H. Dutton Company.

WHILE reading E. F. Benson's "Family Affairs," we were conscious of an inner voice that said "This is in part autobiography." Our secret mentor was right. Benson, in those really bewitching chapters at the beginning of "Family Affairs," gives the story of "abracadabra," that cabalistic word, and the masquerade of a winter's night, a memory of childhood that defied years and gray hairs; and the account, as stated in this book of 1921, parallels closely the fictional narrative of a year or two ago.

In fact, we link E. F. Benson and Hugh Walpole in the ability to shuffle off the mantle of Time and go back to the early teens and beyond, and to be in glorious accord with the pageantry and the romance of the golden hours of youth. We know of no book in the rank and file of modern British memoirs—there's nothing American to be even mentioned—that contains passages of happy interpretation, speaking through memory, equal to the chapters of "Family Affairs" that deal with the springtime of the modern generation of the clan. What tots they were.

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those children of Archbishop Benson! How they loved and emulated one another!

Nobly fine was the literary companionship of the three brothers, Arthur C. E. F. and Hugh. The first became a writer of scholarly essays, limpid in movement, not deep in their searchings into the meanings of conscious things and unconscious appearances of being, but ever nicely worded and satisfying in their simple moods of cultured contentment or gentle acceptance of the untoward and the inscrutable.

The second, from the days of *Dodo* and *The Image in the Sand*, the second strange and unexpected, won and held a family of interested and at times enthusiastic readers. He touched life at many points. His tender satire, his easy dialogue, his questionings into the mysteries of the unseen worlds of telepathy and of manifestations of psychic phenomena, all these were and are evidences of a mind not actually restless, but vitally interested in life.

Hugh, taking a step beyond the reserved mysticism of E. F., went over body and soul to the Catholic Church, and his writings were tinted with the rich hues of his faith.

Our *Family Affairs* makes a comrade, or rather a foil, for Margot Asquith's two volumes of autobiography and fire-works in script. Benson, equable and wholly just in his dealings with men and women, is an antidote for his caustic, at times splenetic, country-woman. In fact, she slips into his book on a page for a line or two.

However, we are not interested in comparisons. We merely suggest a study in contrasts. The two writers moved in circles, social and literary, that must have touched orbits frequently. Benson's reminiscences of Tennyson, faint, and of Browning, strong, show this to have been so. The latter's taciturnity when under fire of question and praise is remarked upon by Benson and a bit of a flash of photographic value gets through in Chapter XI.

"Robert Browning," says Benson, "preserved a cheerful silence" (they were at dinner and Austin Dobson had been referred to) "fill some direct question was put to him. Then drinking off his port he made a notable phrase: 'Well, some people like carved cherry-stones.'"

We read of Benson at Eton and at Cambridge, of his awakening to the beauties of classical literature, of his researches along archeological lines. But we are, all the time, watching the development to maturity of his mind, the growth of his desire and power to write. His own rather naive account of his sending his hastily pen-written manuscript of *Dodo* to Henry James for the latter's perusal and criticism, with amusing results in matters of elderly kindness and youthful assertion and succeeding uncertainties, is

Triumphs of a Golf Champion

"Chick" Evans Records Thrilling Moments on the Links

"CHICK" EVANS' GOLF BOOK. By Charles ("Chick") Evans Jr. Published by Thomas E. Wilson & Co. by the Rely & Lee Company.

CHARLES ("CHICK") EVANS JR., national amateur golf champion, has written a full account of his golfing career from the cradle, which he first occupied at Indianapolis, July 18, 1890, to the peak of his fortunes, reached last September, when he defeated Francis Ouimet in the finals at Roslyn, L. I.

In the golfing world Mr. Evans holds an enviable position. In 1916 he won the "double crown"; that is, he gained both the national amateur and professional titles, a feat never accomplished before by any other golfer in this country. Almost continuously since 1909 he has held the Western amateur title, besides many other lesser honors which have come to him. He tells the story of it all, as his publishers suggest, without permitting "false modesty to rob the narrative of the thrills." In fact he does more than this. He tells not only what actually happened and how he felt himself, but he quotes what the papers had to say about it.

For example, when he sank the final putt that gave him the title at the Merion Cricket Club in 1916, he writes that he received what one of the papers called "the greatest ovation ever given



The Feast of Lanterns
 By the Author of **M.W.U.**

delightful in the light it throws on both men.

There are nodes in the histories of all families. One came to E. F. Benson, the first momentous pause in the story of his own little group, with the death of his father. His father and mother had gone to Hawarden to visit the Gladstones. In his own words, the book closes thus:

"They had all gone to early communion on Sunday morning, and walked again to church for the 11 o'clock service. Mrs. Gladstone and they were in a pew together, and during the confession my father sank back from his upright kneeling, and did no more than sigh. He bowed himself before his Lord, as he met Him face to face."

Much as we wish that this simple, faithful and yet illuminating story of a remarkable family might have been continued at least down to the years of the war, we feel that E. F. Benson was right in closing, in laying down his pen when he did. For we finish *Our Family Affairs* with the feeling that here is a book from the heart of one who loves and has loved greatly, a revelatory document properly sealed at the coming of a moment when darkness descended for an hour.

School Life

Ian Hay Recalls Only the Lighter Side

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF SCHOOL LIFE. By Ian Hay. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

FEW writers escape the common urge to set down at some time or other in their career an account of their school days. Usually they postpone it until they have reached the point where they can look back and say: "Ah, there! those were the happy days!" And consequently they write—as Ian Hay has done—of the lighter side of school life.

But what of the darker side? How can we have any truth about the matter until some one does the ghastly dull, dreary side as well?

Major Ian Hay left his school days before the war, before *The First Hundred Thousand*. The volume had an obscure publication in this country, obscure because before Major Beith began to write of training camp life he had few American readers.

He dissects the schoolboy rather too coldly to catch all the humor, but he is pretty human about it and always readable. We liked best his description of the tortures experienced by the boy with his "people" up for the exercises.

"A schoolboy with his 'people' in town neither expects nor desires the society of his friends," he writes. "His father may be genial, his mother charming, his sister pretty; but in the jaundiced eyes of their youthful host they are nothing more or less than a gang of lepers—to be segregated from all communication with the outer world; to be conveyed from one point to another as stealthily as possible; and above all to be kept out of the way of masters."

A Survey of American Literature

Wide Field Covered by Experts in Concluding Volumes of Cambridge History

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE. Vols. III and IV. Edited by William Peterfield Trent, John Erskine, Stuart P. Sherman and Carl Van Doren. Published by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

THESE two volumes mark the completion of a monumental work. The Cambridge History presents an exhaustive survey of American literature in every field down to the end of the nineteenth century. The magnitude of the work may be judged from the fact that the bibliographies alone take up almost two hundred pages, and the volumes are a triumph of American scholarship and criticism. The chapters on individual authors and literary groups are written by experts, but they are free from verbosity and pedantry. The history is not only impressive and informative, it is also highly interesting and eminently readable.

Special interest in the third volume is attached to the criticisms of three outstanding American novelists—Mark Twain, William Dean Howells and Henry James. Stuart P. Sherman pays a state-tribute to the genius and personality of the author of *Huckleberry Finn*.

A Tribute to Mark Twain

"Mark Twain is one of our great representative men. He is a fulfilled promise of American life. He proves the virtues of the land and the society in which he was born and fostered. He incarnates the spirit of an epoch of American history when the nation, territorially and spiritually enlarged, entered lustily upon new adventures. In the retrospect he looms for us with Whitman and Lincoln, recognizably his countrymen, out of the shadows of the Civil War, an unmistakable native son of an eager, westward-moving people—unconventional, self-reliant, mirthful, profane, realistic, cynical, boisterous, popular, tender-hearted, touched with chivalry and permeated to the marrow of his bones with the sentiment of democratic society and with loyalty to American institutions."

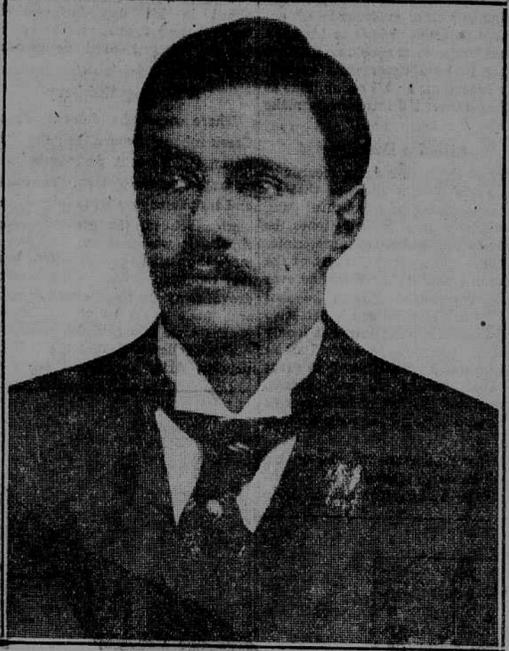
Professor Sherman gives a well balanced account of Mark Twain's life and work, emphasizing the sturdy originality of his creative talent.

Howells is ably discussed by Carl Van Doren. He helped to introduce the realistic tradition into our literature, although his realism never carried him to very violent or startling lengths. Although self-educated, he accommodated himself very readily to the requirements of classical style. His many novels, with their almost unbroken succession of happy endings, seem perhaps too consistently sunny to those who have fed upon the strong fare of Dostoevsky and Zola. Yet Howells was certainly a shrewd observer of human nature; and his long list of writings constitutes a valuable record of American social life. Dr. Van Doren mentions the strong influence of Tolstoy upon Howells in his latest years. The spirit of the great Russian is reflected in *Altruria*, Howells's attempt to envisage an ideal community.

The delicate and elusive quality of Henry James is adequately savored by Joseph Warren Beach. Professor Beach compares James with Pater; both men were preeminently literary impressionists, eager to explore and define the most minutely differentiated shades of sensation.

The development of history during the last half of the nineteenth century is analyzed by Professor John Spencer Bassett. During this period history became more scientific and less literary in its character. It became more technical and lost favor with the general reading public. Lately men like Beard, Robinson, Cheney, and Schapiro have done much to give history a new birth in humanism.

Newspapers and Magazines
The growth and popularization of newspapers and magazines after the Civil War is described in chapters by



E. F. BENSON, author of *Dodo* and other books, as he was at twenty-six

American Guide Book in Free Verse

John Gould Fletcher's Breakers and Granite an Ambitious Effort

By Malcolm Cowley
BREAKERS AND GRANITE. By John Gould Fletcher. Published by the Macmillan Company.

BREAKERS AND GRANITE is the record of John Gould Fletcher's journeys across this continent; one might almost call it a guide book in free verse to these United States.

The volume opens when the vessel that bears him is towed through New York harbor. He describes Manhattan, New England, Chicago, not in terms of the roughneck rhapsodies of Carl Sandburg or of the flutulent "interpretations" of Young Georgian novelists on a lecture tour, but with sort of hard and cruel beauty that one has not been taught to expect from American poets. He travels down the Mississippi into the Old South, then westward into Arizona.

His journeying, indeed, is not only through space, but through time; he goes back to the slaughter of the buffalo, to the Civil War, to the age of clipper ships. To say that his subject is tremendous is a flat and obvious statement. Especially it is a gigantic theme for Mr. Fletcher, who has expressed himself frequently heretofore, in mediums as brief and delicate as the haiku.

Breakers and Granite, in other words, is an attempt at something approaching infinity, and there is a question whether the attempt is well advised. There is a limit to the bigness of the impression which any one book can convey. Take Romain Rolland, for example. He tried to explain the artistic consciousness completely in one huge novel, and yet what one remembers out of *Jean-Christophe* is not the general effect, but the beauty of some of the disconnected passages. Barbusse, who attempted in one volume to create a general impression of war, succeeds only in creating a few vivid sketches of its incidents. And so with Fletcher. Inasmuch as his volume makes this attempt at bigness, inasmuch as it tries to be the atlas and epitome of a nation, the Great American Novel in verse, it is practically foredoomed to failure. The individual poems have beauty and vitality, but not the general conception of the volume. The America he describes is not a unified organism; it is another case where the sum of the parts is greater than the whole.

It is among these parts, then, that one must look for the excellences of the volume. He photographs the continent from strange angles and elevations. For example, he says of the land along Hendrick Hudson coasted that it was "A continent of forests, out of which twelve great rivers—Merrimac, Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware, Susquehanna, Potomac, James, Roanoke, Peedee and Santee, Savannah and Altamaha—rise and pour their waters into the ocean." Out of his impressions of Manhattan he chooses such random pictures as that of an old Jewish cemetery or of the gawgawed lawns of an inn overlooking the Hudson; in other words, he knows his city well enough to go beyond the conventional and expected pangs to the skyscrapers. He finds in New England a symbolic expression of the struggle of the whole nation—it is the combat between the breakers and the granite boulders of the shore; between the disintegrating forces and those solid qualities of the nation which remain and withstand. It is from this conflict that he has taken the name of the volume.

Mr. Fletcher is peculiarly qualified for these unusual pictures of portions of our continent because he is an American who has spent a large portion of his life abroad. He thus is able to combine the perspective of the foreigner with the familiarity of the native. In his description of a voyage down the Mississippi this combination shows to unusually good effect; he is able to lend distance and a pleasing exoticism to a description of his own land—something which few poets have been able to achieve. There is the

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The Sixth Sense

Novel of London Pictures Life Before the Late War

THE SIXTH SENSE. By Stephen McKenna. George H. Dutton Company.

THESE novels of Stephen McKenna have appeared in a queer, rather disorderly sequence. He got the attention of a huge public with his *Sonia*, one of the five or six real British novels of the war, and then, having stepped out of his study to a highway of fame, he gave us stories that carried *Sonia* and her friends on to new and at times disturbing relations and experiences. Then he switched back to a period that, definitely charted, lies in one or two ante-bellum years, and wrote, or dug up, revamped and published, *Sheila Intervenes* and *The Sixth Sense*, both highly colored and tense novels of life in circles of the elect of London in 1912 and 1913.

The true, unmistakable hero of *The Sixth Sense* is Lambert Aintree, the "Seraph," a young man with a strange ability to foretell events and to catch on the mirror of his mind acts of his intimates who are distant at the times of this capturing. The story is told by one Merivale, who returns to London after a twenty years' absence to find himself head over heels in the chaos of the suffrage movement. The girl Aintree loves and the young woman Merivale learns to love are caught in the eddying whirl of the physical violence phase of the feminist campaign, and the stormy moment—it is a tempestuous one—arrives when one of the two women has the other abducted for political purposes. The "Seraph's" sixth sense gets to work instantly and we have a chapter that stands right up on its feet and dares Sherlock Holmes to do his worst or his best. As a study of the uneasy London of 1913 this novel has value as a critique of contemporary manners, modes and moods.

The history conveys an impression of massive and imperishable scholarship. It is an encyclopedia of information about individual writers and their works, and it clarifies the most important tendencies in our national literature by its sound and penetrating criticism. It is an achievement of which editors and contributors alike may well be proud.

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