A Sheaf of Varied Fiction and Travel Books for Vacation

Swinnerton Gives in Coquette A Vivid Study of London Life

Story of Sally Minto Reveals Ability That Made Nocturne and September Novels of First Rank

By Samuel Abbott

COQUETTE. By Frank Swinnerton. Published by George H. Doran Company. $1.90.

FRANK SWINNERTON, in his Coquette, completes a trio of studies of feminine idiosyncrasies. The three, this story, Nocturne and September, make an equilateral triangle that other novelists will find difficulty in equaling in perfection of evenly balanced sides. They establish Swinnerton as a figure somewhat isolated in a corner of singular adeptness when it comes to a detached searching into the whims, the psychological apparitions and the dogmatic assertiveness of certain types of women.

Sally Minto dominates her book, Coquette, from cover to cover. A girl of a British lower class, tinged with a hint of flapperism, somewhat brazen in her unswerving quest for the things she wants, Sally is still just enough of a completely imagined individual to win our sympathies even when she surprises and disgusts. It is her sincere but selfish battle to grasp the rewards of love and of personal preferment among her fellows that gives Swinnerton his theme.

It is his supremely admirable ability to picture her from a ground of detachment in creation that enables him to sense her as a real human being, a personality moving beyond the fences of his own mental habitat. Swinnerton seems to say to us "Watch that girl! She is interesting." And we sit down at his side, involved for the moment in the little drama of Sally, forgetful of the rather important fact that the man with us is responsible for her. This is a great art, and when one considers the isolation from one another of the women of the three novels above mentioned, the completeness of their individual independence, we don't begrudge Swinnerton any of his laurels.

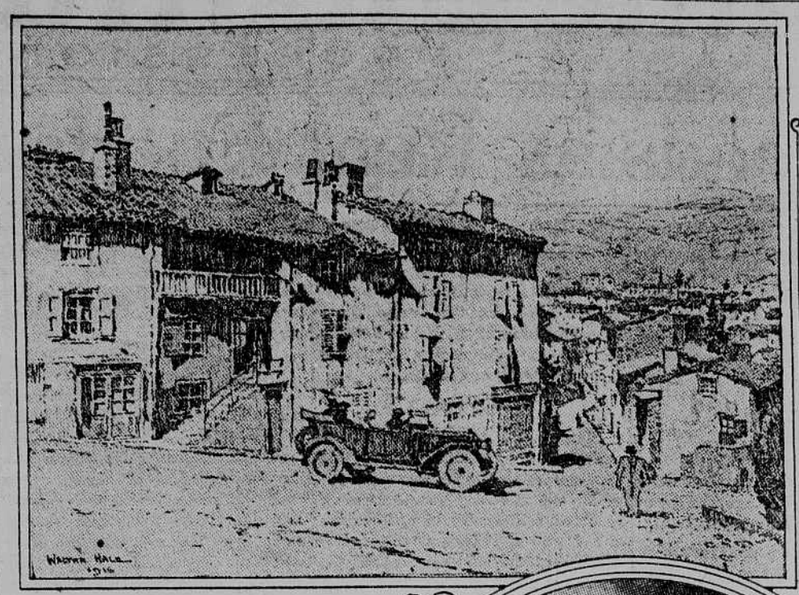
Sally was something of a petit Napoleon in skirts. The span of her grand episode, as considered in this novel, is but a few months, and she is under eighteen when she sets out to conquer her fate. Living alone with her weak and inefficient mother in a section of the skirts of London, she permits her fleeting imagination to voyage out over the city. The homes of the rich, the costly apparel of women and girls seen in the streets, the flaunted possessions of people who can have what she lacks, fire her to thrust herself from her chrysalis of poverty and be a thing of loveliness, sought and admired. This craving drives her in two ways, to the shop of the artificer of beauty, where she has her hair dyed to a more attractive color, and to the arms of a lover, for she desires to test her ability to conquer men.

Poor Sally! She lays the lime for her own trap. Her entrance into a dressmaking establishment, where, by her adroit use of her personal charms and her shifty wit, she makes herself indispensable to the management, opens a door for her to the winning of Bertram Merrick, known as "Gaga" to the girls of the shop, the son of the owner. She plays him for his heart, his money and the dictatorship of the business. But Sally has already loved too well. One Toby, a burly, passionate fellow with a room over those occupied by Sally and her mother, has fallen a victim to her methods of enslaving and then, shaking his shackles, has made himself her master.

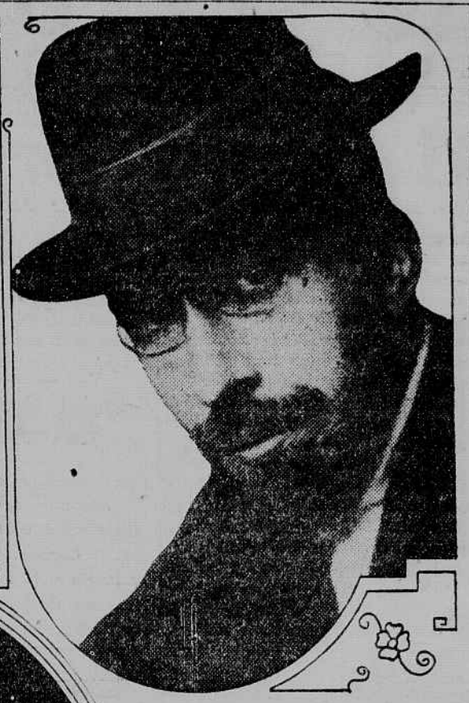
Swinnerton tells us that "more than anything else it was necessity to her to gratify her sense of power. As for a sense of honor, Sally had been born without one." Her capture of the weakling "Gaga" gave her the keys to his mother's business. Her capture of Toby resulted in a masculine revolt, a sordid love affair and the menace of a child to come.

And so, "at the age of eighteen, dominating a world which she had long since determined to conquer," wedded to "Gaga" and receiving the embraces of Toby, Sally finds herself in a position of peril. "More than anything in the world she now needed a friend." But her own warding off of all amicable approaches by girls who could have helped her, together with her inability to confess fault and be frank, brings her at last to the wall she cannot scale. In one dark evening of swift punishment, an hour that hurls into disorder and death the three salient characters of the novel, the inevitable solution arrives. Coquette might have ended otherwise. As a relentless study of a self-centered young woman, a girl who dared the world to give her what she wanted at her own price, this novel is a thing of stark candor. It could have no other logical close.

There will be many more novels concerned with the engrossing marvel of the mind of the girl on the borderland of womanhood. But there will be few in this field, even in a score of years to come, that will equal this one by Frank Swinnerton in its astonishingly close tread on the heels of reality. For here is a novelist who has stepped into the trail of one of his people and followed with the persistent ardor of one who, seeing before him a path leading to the mist of a strange and dangerous country, must record every move, every bit of talk and every gesture that interprets.



THIS illustration is from The Car That Went Abroad, by Albert Bigelow Paine (Harper). The book describes "a motor trip through Europe in the Golden Age."



FRANK SWINNERTON, whose new novel, Coquette (Doran) completes his trio of studies of feminine idiosyncracies which also includes Nocturne and September

PHOTO © HARRIS & EWING

JAN CHRISTIAN SMUTS, Premier of South Africa, who is playing a leading part in the present negotiations for the settlement of the Irish problem. A vivid sketch of Smuts' personality is contained in Isaac Marcosson's new book, An African Adventure (Lane)

Journeying Through the Congo Region with Isaac Marcosson

Splendid Character Sketch of General Smuts in Story of Trip in Central and Southern Africa

AN AFRICAN ADVENTURE. By Isaac F. Marcosson. Published by John Lane Company.

JAN CHRISTIAN SMUTS, Premier of South Africa and former Boer leader, whose genius as a statesman and conciliator is now being employed in the negotiations which are going on for a settlement of the thorny Irish problem, is the outstanding personality in Mr. Marcosson's account of his trip through southern and central Africa.

The author spent a week with General Smuts at Capetown, and carried away some very vivid impressions of his character and ideas. Smuts, as depicted by Marcosson, is a man of infinite patience and sagacity, a practical idealist whose high visions of future world peace are always tempered by a saving consciousness of the realities of the immediate situation. The choice of Smuts as a semi-official mediator in the Irish situation seems peculiarly happy because, as a former officer in the Boer army who is now defending the British Empire against the attacks of the more extreme Boer nationalists, he may be expected to give adequate consideration to the viewpoints of both sides.

With his usual talent for personal description, Mr. Marcosson gives an excellent account of the general's outward appearance and habits. Smuts has a lofty forehead, an arched nose, a large mouth. His eyes are blue. He has the wiry and rangy body of a man who keeps in good physical trim by constant exercise. His manner, although friendly, is reserved and undemonstrative, and as a speaker he scores his points through logic rather than through oratorical flights.

Taking leave of General Smuts, the author starts on his trip. The Union of South Africa is a flourishing country, little affected by the business depression which has become almost world-wide since the end of the war. Its gold and diamond mines are among the richest in the world. Perhaps the most serious cloud on its horizon, aside from the minor friction between British and Boers, is the race problem. The natives outnumber the whites by more than four to one in South Africa, and the relations between the two races have not always been peaceful and harmonious.

The spell of Cecil Rhodes, the great African adventurer and imperialist, lies heavy upon Mr. Marcosson. Wherever he goes he finds traces of Rhodes's handiwork, and the book is a veritable collection of anecdotes about Rhodes and Rhodes's associates. The great colonial leader now lies buried in the province which bears his name—in a spot which he had himself chosen for his grave, in the heart of the Matopo Hills.

The great Congo River, with its innumerable tributary streams, waters the heart of Africa. Mr. Marcosson encountered some of the most interesting experiences traveling down this river in a slowly moving steamboat. The natives who live on the banks of the river are not so much addicted to cannibalism as they were before the Europeans came, but they still retain many of their wild and primitive customs.

A favorite method of decoration is to cut the body in various places, aggravate the wounds by pouring in some kind of liquid and shape the welts into fantastic patterns. The book includes pictures illustrating this practice.

Not even the wilds of the Congo have escaped the universal high cost of living. Mr. Marcosson was accompanied during part of his trip by the Belgian Colonial Minister, who was bombarded with questions at one village about the increased price of salt.

The Congo region is rich in folklore. The natives are especially fond of animal stories, from which they often draw a moral. The author repeats several of these tales, of which the following is typical:

"One day the elephant met the shrew mouse on his road. 'Out of the way!' cried the latter. 'I am the bigger and it is your place to look out!' replied the monster. 'Curse you!' retorted the shrew mouse, furiously. 'May the long grass cut your legs!' 'And may you meet your death when you walk in the road!' replied the other, crushing him under his huge foot. Both curses have been fulfilled. From that day the elephant wounds himself when he goes through the long grass and the shrew mouse meets her death when she crosses the road."

American business enterprise has penetrated even the remote districts of the Congo. The author paid a visit to some engineers from the United States whom he found hard at work developing the diamond mines of the region.

Mr. Marcosson has acquired deserved fame as a sort of super reporter—an inspired observer of men and things. The present book is fully up to his customary standard. It sets the life of a large portion of the Dark Continent before the reader's eyes in a series of varied, clear-cut sketches, drawn from personal experience and enlivened with humor.

A Whimsical Story

RAINY WEEK. By Eleanor Hallowell Abbott. Published by E. P. Dutton & Co. $1.60.

THIS story of a group of persons of varying ages, tastes and temperaments, imprisoned in a lonely country house by the rain for a week is written in Eleanor Hallowell Abbott's familiar whimsical and delightful style. The narrative is crisp and sparkling, and there are numerous surprises and unexpected touches in the story. Rainy Week enhances the reputation of the author of Molly Make-Believe.

The Man of Destiny

THE MAN WITHIN. By Harry Durant. Published by Samuel French.

THE intimate, personal side of Napoleon's character is emphasized in this four-act play, which carries the famous Corsican from the earliest stages of his career to his final exile in St. Helena.

Coningsby Dawson Looks for Title First in Writing Novel

Well Known Novelist, Describing His Working Methods, Tells How He Starts With First and Last Chapters

By Coningsby Dawson

Author of The Kingdom Round the Corner, The Garden Without Walls, etc.

(Reprinted by special arrangement from Brentano's Book Chat)

I HAVE read accounts of exuberant gentlemen who shout with laughter while they create their characters and involve them in escapades. Personally, I have always doubted such accounts. Being a novelist is just as much a business as being a lawyer, an architect or a banker, and none of the members of these professions shout with laughter at the moments when their minds are most concentrated. And yet they could afford to display more levity than a novelist, for in their professions competition is not as great.

There are rarely more than ten successful novels in any year, out of the vast number published. The successful novelist of this year cannot count on being the successful novelist of the next. The average run of good fortune foa a writing man does not exceed five years. After he has suffered an eclipse it requires twice the merit to bring him back that it originally required to place him. This being the case there is every reason why gentlemen of my profession should feel excessively timid when they make their first mark on the virgin page.

But long before the first sentence is written the work has been commenced. My first idea for a novel always comes in the form of a title. Usually the title flashes on me as a pure gift from the gods. It's the only gift I get. The rest has to be earned. The Garden Without Walls started with a title; so did The Little House, so did The Kingdom Round the Corner. Behind each of these lay a philosophic idea which had probably been seeking expression for some time. I lived in The Little House in London the year following the armistice. It stands in a square in which E. F Benson resides. Both house and square have figured in several of his writings. My particular little house seemed to urge me to put it into fiction and this gave me the conceit of letting a house tell a story in its own person. But from then on I had to invent. Nothing that I invented had really happened.

The same way with The Kingdom Round the Corner. The idea which the title expressed had been with me for four years and grew naturally out of my experience in the war—the idea that it is the appearance of triumph in the face of defeat that makes tomorrow's victory sure. You can wear down the force of any adversity with courage. The kingdom which you seek lies further up the road; though you miss it to-day you will discover it around some future corner if you only possess the pluck to push on.

Having gained my title it took me six months to think out my plot; through all of those six months my brain never ceased to work upon it. I was reading, traveling, talking in a Pullman when some hint of added intrigue for the plot would suggest itself. One's brain was like a detective, always out of sight, but never missing a clew presented to it by experience.

When I have snatched my title the next thing that I seek is my last chapter. A novel is quite useless unless its last chapter is its best. When I have plotted my last chapter I commence to hunt for my first. Not until I have pocketed these three essentials, the title, the last chapter and the first, do I feel safe to take pen in hand. The middle part develops as I write.

There are a thousand ways of constructing a noval. Each one of a hundred writers will propound a different method. I believe the majority of novelists have their manuscripts completed before the necessity for a title suggests itself. The proof of the method is in its reception by the public. Any method is good which attains success.

Studies in Drama

PLAYS FOR CLASSROOM INTERPRETATION. By Edwin Van B. Knickerbocker. Published by Henry Holt & Co.

THIS book is designed as a high school textbook in dramatic interpretation. Works by Stephen Phillips, Lady Gregory and Lord Dunsany are included in the seven plays which are studied as models.

A Sea Classic

Melville's Story of Whale in Reprint

MOBY DICK. By Herman Melville. Oxford University Press. $1.

MELVILLE'S winning of his fame has been a process of slow germination. A dozen or twenty years ago he was known to a select body of lovers of authentic literature of the sea. To-day his regiment of readers and admirers has flowered out in a small army, for whom his Moby Dick is his masterpiece. That its author gave to it the utmost of his powers is revealed in his statement to Hawthorne that it "had been cooked in hell fire." Aside from its almost epic account of the struggle between Captain Ahab and the huge white whale Moby Dick in pages that are steeped in the gorgeous imagery of a mind saturated with the lore of whaling, this story, of which all Americans should be proud, contains some of the finest word seascapes in the language.

Space is limited on this page, and we can give but a single typical passage from Moby Dick. "To any meditative Magian rover this serene Pacific, once beheld, must ever after be the sea of his adoption. It rolls the midmost waters of the world, the Indian Ocean and Atlantic being but its arms. The same waves wash the moles of the new-built Californian towns, but yesterday planted by the recentest race of men and leave the faded but still gorgeous skirts of Asiatic lands older than Abraham, while all between float milky ways of coral isles and low-lying, endless, unknown archipelagoes and impenetrable Japans. Thus this mysterious divine Pacific zones the world's whole bulk about, makes all coasts one bay to it, seems the tide-beating heart of earth."

Marx and Lenin

FROM MARX TO LENIN: By Morris Hillquit. Published by the Hanford Press. $1.

MORRIS HILLQUIT, who is perhaps the foremost intellectual leader in the American Socialist party, attempts to clarify the confused currents of thought and action which have appeared in the international Socialist movement as a result of the war and the Russian revolution. Professing full sympathy with the Soviet regime in Russia, Mr. Hillquit denounces the Third, or Communist, International, which, in his opinion, has brought division and discord into the ranks of Socialists all over the world by setting up arbitrary and unreasonable tests of admission and requiring affiliated parties to adopt uniform and impracticable methods of propaganda and action.

Indian Trails

THE TOTEM OF BLACK HAWK. By Everett McNeil. Published by E. P. Dutton & Co. $2.

A RED-BLOODED adventure story of the Western frontier at the time of the Black Hawk War. Abraham Lincoln, as a young captain of volunteers, plays a prominent part in the concluding chapters of the book.

English Speech

Survey of Our Language From Earliest Days

HISTORIC ENGLISH. By James C. Fernald. Published by Funk & Wagnalls Company. $1.90.

WHEN Dr. James C. Fernald completed his manuscript, Historic English, his life work was ended, for it was the last book from his long-busied pen. The wealth of his rich knowledge of our mother tongue and his acquaintance with the beginnings and growth to dominion of the English-speaking races are blended to good effect in this book, which traces the development of the language as shaped by history and as exerting a retroactive influence on men and manners.

Of the ten chapers in this history, those on Anglo-Saxon in English Speech, The English Bible and English as a World Language, strike us as perhaps the best, because most illuminating, evidently written in a spirit of devotion to the work in hand. The last of the three is a closely argued plea for unity of England, her Dominions and the United States through the amalgam of a common tongue enriched by the heritage of a noble literature.

This book should prove to be a text book of value for schools and colleges. It has a yet higher mission in its possibility of acquainting mature minds with the fascinating and important story of the growth to fullness of expression and splendid power of the English language.

American Fiction

Brilliant History of Our Novelists

THE AMERICAN NOVEL. By Carl Van Doren. Published by the Macmillan Company. $2.

THERE has been for years ample room for a reliable history of the inception, growth and present condition of American fiction. Carl Van Doren's The American Novel, filling the want, arrives at an auspicious hour, for the reading public of the United States has come to realize that the nation has a record in its long line of story tellers, a chronicle worthy of conscientious reporting. No single year in the writer's memory has shown an appraisal of the present output of novels, together with an honest study of their authors, more general and notable than that of 1921. Carl Von Doren, in his opening chapters, goes to the tiny trickles from the head pool, the fountain of national inspiration. Briefly relating the compositions and banalities of the rhetorical school of historical fiction that followed the Revolution and controlled themes until well into the nineteenth century, he comes to Fenimore Cooper and the rising of our first stars of magnitude. Then follows that wizard of the sea, Melville, and the reflective, moody and poetic Hawthorne. At last the trickle has become a stream.

Down through the years the historian journeys to the present, to the two contrasted schools of rococo romance and naturalism. The pages on the rococo epidemic, on the period that gave us Hugh Wynne, Janice Meredith and The Crossing, novels that combined rare accuracy in matters of history and tendency to overiaud national heroes, are of marked merit, but the real meat, the, to us, enduring merit of this book, is to be found in its closing pages, those that treat the phenomena and the significance of the fiction of to-day.

We are at a highway that swerves from our old long-traveled road, at an avenue that opens to a new country, that of a careful, undistorted and severely critical appraisal of national traits and movements by our tnovelists. Edith Wharton, Sinclair Lewis, Zona Gale, Sherwood Anderson and others are in the van of the column entering this road, and Van Doren's evaluation of their methods and of their results in text is a sincere and successful effort to praise and to warn. Altogether a needed and useful book.

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