The Drama of an English Spinster : A Tale of the Trail Makers

A Terse, Strong Study of a Victorian Englishwoman

May Sinclair, in Her "Harriett Frean," Sketches With Relentless Touch a Woman Cloistered in Self

By Samuel Abbott

LIFE AND DEATH OF HARRIETT FREAN. By May Sinclair. Published by the Macmillan Company. $1.75.

THE woman, Harriett Frean, fills this book as the substance of an apple fills the skin. There's not a page that does not concern her. May Sinclair set out to get Harriett revealed completely and in the space of a few chapters written in terse sentences. A method of this nature necessitates rigid economy in text and, behind it all, in the workshop of the creating mind, a power to make a string of ten or a dozen words glow with a pearl fire. The story of Harriett, covering her life from early girlhood to her death, can be slipped into a rather small pocket. But its dimensions as a study of a woman are so broad that it defies any measure.

Harriett Frean is Victorian, in the sense that implies convention and narrowness. Her father, the elegant Hilton Frean, dipped into books by Darwin, Huxley and Herbert Spencer, dabbled in stocks and confessed a fascination for "seeing how far you can go." He went too far in the end and dragged others to ruin with him. To Harriett, who turned to Longfellow and other pretty writers for consolation and pleasure, her father remained to the last a figure of perfection. The girl was developed and nourished in an atmosphere of paternal platitude and literary posies.

Harriett existed always within the circle of her own personality. She evaluated the thought and act of others through the sieve of her judgment, and that sieve had a very fine mesh. She rarely achieved an understanding of another man or woman, and this inability to respond honestly and with comprehension, cost her the loss of the man she loved and fenced her from friends and servants who wished to help her. The story is one of ignorant futilities. More than once you get flashes of a real woman in Harriett. Her conduct with the girl Maggie, her heroism in her own last dreadful hours, give clews to a self that might have been wholly noble, if—Ah, that "if."

This book should be read through twice at least. Once, as one scans, or used to scan, Virgil. Again, to get into the current of subtle analysis that becomes starkly realistic in the eyes of a close rereading. It is in every way the most unrelenting book of its kind that we have met in months. Harriett Frean's whole entity comes right out on the surface. The strokes of the brush that bring her to finality on a canvas of fiction are made with no preliminary waverings. Miss Sinclair's art is definite in approach and complete in arrival. There's no waste.

Among English women who are writing good fiction to-day, three are typical of as many modes. To us, for we love the country, the spaces of plowed field and neighborly forest, Sheila Kaye-Smith's stories satisfy a real want. There is a depth in them and a horizon as well. While they search into the whys, wherefores and therefores of simple folk of the soil, they are hued all through with a magic presence of winds, waters and stars. We found the same love of the heavens at night in Mrs. Gerould's "Lost Valley," in references to Polaris and the Great Dipper. Life would be a tiresome affair if it were one of perpetual sunlight. It takes the firmament aglow with a myriad candles to light us to the stairs of the Infinite. But we wander. The other two women are May Sinclair, arrow-like in her journey to the heart of people, and Clemence Dane, keen in her quest for motives that move women in fields not wholly near the front door step.

Labor and Expense

Increments of Cost in Production

ESSENTIALS OF INDUSTRIAL COSTING. By George S. Armstrong. Published by D. Appleton & Co.

EARLY man had little trouble with the problem of cost in the production and sale of his goods. His machines were his hands and a few crude tools, and he bartered or exchanged his products, content with a fair margin of profit, and it was easy to compute values in the simple stages of production. As civilization advanced and the machine became the medium of production, with man as an operator, there entered into the problem a small legion of incidental expenses. The wear and tear on the machine, the rise and fall, sometimes swift and unexpected, of cost of raw material, these and other elements greatly complicated the matter of sagacious costing. To-day, with an exceedingly intricate condition existing in the world markets, there is need of extreme caution in determining the cash values of the expenses entailed in creating goods for market.

George S. Armstrong, in his elaborately worked out treatise, "Essentials of Industrial Costing," has gone to the rock beds of fact, has refused the admonition of theory and has written a book that cannot fail to win the respect and the careful study of men who are producers, especially those operating on large scales. His scheme of presentation through tabulation is well developed. After all, the graphic picturing of cash matters is the one to get ideas through to the laboratory of critical thought.

In his chapter on "Economic Development and Necessity of Costing" one finds this sentence: "Costing is the happiest illustration that 'knowledge is power' and that failure to secure this knowledge is a business sin which will lead inevitably to death as its wage." Yet, despite the truth of this axiom, "in the two greatest commodity-producing countries in the world it is found that intelligently directed control of the vast and complex machinery of manufacture exists in less than 10 per cent of the one and 5 per cent in the other in industry as a whole."

There are eleven chapters in this book. They are so important that we give the titles of all and regret that we lack space for an analysis of each; Economic Development and Necessity of Costing; the Purpose and Function of Costing; the Mechanism of Costing; Elements of Costing and Sources of Costing Data; the Costing of Material; the Costing of Labor; the Collection of Expense in Costing; the Costing of Depreciation, Interest and Power; the Distribution and Application of Expense in Costing; the Connection of Costing With the General Books and the Monthly Statements Therefrom.

With Wing and Fin

A PHILOSOPHER WITH NATURE. By Benjamin Kidd. Published by the George H. Doran Company. $3.

HERE is Benjamin Kidd, the author of the well known "Social Evolution," in the garb of a lover of nature, and his book, "A Philosopher With Nature," is a delightful surprise, for it reveals him as one worthy to be classed with Jefferies, Burroughs and Fabre. Kidd has entered the realm of animal life as a scientific observer and student of the colony and economic existence of birds and insects. In the opening chapters of his book he carries us with him to shores and estuaries where sea birds and fish abound, and gives us almost photographic picturings of beautiful and to us unusual scenes. In his later chapters he leads us to fields near London, by day and by night, and to the hive and wandering life of bees. We shall lay this book on a table near at hand, to be opened and read on winter evenings, for it is altogether the most fascinating thing of its kind of the year.

The Rambler

Book Nooks in Old Manhattan

IF ONE will take the time to visit a few of the many bookshops of the city that handle Americana he will soon discover that we, as a people, are awakening to a realization of the importance of our national story. Not many years ago it was possible to pick up books, letters, maps and other printed and written evidences of our ancestors, in towns and cities of the Atlantic seaboard. Southern New England was a mine of treasures, and garrets in houses that had sheltered families for generations yielded many a rare bit. But the Yankee is quick to sense values, and prices soared with the growth of demand.

The push of the pioneer into the West, along the trails that led to Oregon and California, caused the publication of books and maps now greatly prized. Nothing is more fascinating to the collector of Americana of the dawning Western period than the first crude maps of the Rocky and trans-Rocky regions. A river running in a wrong direction, mountains in impossible places, together with quaint and frequently naïve text printed as items of caution or promise, give a Western map of the first half of the last century an interest that never wanes. John Fiske, in his "The Discovery of America," says that the student should go to the original, distorted conceptions of geography if he wishes to transfer himself to the ideas of a period.

We were told the other day, by Mendoza on Ann Street, that it is difficult to meet the requests for early material illustrative and descriptive of our country. He says he has many purchasers for each rarity that drifts into his shop. We repeat what we have said before. There is a native pride in the romance of our great story as a nation, and many men in many corners are gathering and preserving fragments that are to prove of extreme value in future writings that deal with America.

H. G. Fiedler, on Vesey Street, specializes in natural history. The world is his province, but he collects and disposes of much printed matter on the flora, fauna and geology of the United States. He, too, asserts that interest in our country, along lines other than those of political growth, is steadily on the up grade.

Business is looking up at Hector MacQuarrie's bookshop on Washington Place, where Dorothy Stockbridge is in charge. By the way, the Stockbridge stocks gave four one-act plays at the Fifteenth Street Theater on the nights of February 17 and 18. John Farrar, of "The Bookman," was represented with a thriller, "Jack," an adroit little thing of lawless elements, pickpockets and a country greening. We quibbled with ourself over its ending. Kenneth Andrews, in his "America Passes By," disdaining the high horse of rampage, gave a decidedly remunerative study of a feminine fragment of Japan thrust with her American husband into the uncloistered center of Chicago. There was a lot to think about in this little sketch. BEN BODLEIAN.

The Foreman

THE FOREMAN AND HIS JOB. By Charles H. Allen. Published by J. B. Lippincott Company. $1.50.

THE foreman is a sort of connecting link between employer and employee. To him come the problems of a working force, the thrashing out of new ideas and the many intricacies that appear in the handling of men. The author of this handbook has had a long experience as a conference leader among foremen and as adviser to industrial plants. He has gathered and tabulated a vast amount of data that bear intimately on difficult questions that continually perplex the world of labor, demanding speedy answers. The pages in this book that deal with the "human factor" are of decided worth, for it is with the man in the machine that one finds the snag when it comes to final analyses. There must be thousands of foremen in the United States who would find a great deal of help in this carefully written, thoughtful book.

MAY SINCLAIR, author of "Life and Death of Harriett Frean" (Macmillan), a searching study of a woman's mind.

An Epic of the West With Prelude in the East

Herbert Quick, in His "Vandemark's Folly," Gives Story of a Great Trek in Form of Fiction

By Charles Hanson Towne

VANDEMARK'S FOLLY. By Herbert Quick. Published by Bobbs-Merrill Company. $2.

"VANDEMARK'S FOLLY" is a novel after my own heart—a vivid narrative that covers a glowing period of the history of this vast country of ours; a glorious picture of the brave pioneers in our Middle West painted on a broad canvas. The colors are slashed on—there are long passages of thrilling beauty—and the human figures emerge from the heavy paint, curiously alive and wonderful. Ingenious, too, is the manner of the telling of this tale. Old J. T. Vandemark is the recorder of the rapid events which swept his people on in those early days of the 1810's, and beyond the Civil War, and with a deft pen in his hand, he sits down and remembers the first years of his own life, when he lived in a village near the Erie Canal, "somewhere between Rome and Syracuse." His cruel stepfather ill-treated him until he could stand the beatings no longer, and though he suffered more, perhaps, in the spiritual and physical separation from his adored mother, he had to fly from the tyrant's wrath. There is a powerful scene by the side of the canal, when he received his final whipping. A kindly, if uncouth, canal boat captain rescues him from this particularly dreadful punishment and he is easily persuaded to board the slow-moving boat, and press on into a new world. This early portion of the book is splendidly written. One sees the rough men and women with whom the sensitive boy comes in contact, feels their primitive passions and pains, and get glimpses of the kind of life led by the free-and-easy group who drank and swore and fought and worked, whose lives seemed to burn out in one long carouse.

The hero comes from that phlegmatic Dutch stock which finds it hard to make swift decisions. The lad is torn between his innate love of adventure and his craving for his mother left behind. Down in his heart is the need of her and her kindly ministrations; and his determination to find her once more, though of gradual growth, finally forces him to the supreme effort. But in the months of his absence much has happened, and when he comes at last to that poor home of his stepfather he discovers that the only woman he loved is dead and that a slut has taken her place in his stepfather's menage. Again the boy wanders away, and the romance of his life begins in those sweeping spaces where the wind blows over the golden wheat and corn and the eternal song of the winds is sung in the high trees. He comes to love the soil; and the desire for a permanent abiding place is strong within him. The beauty of the idyllic love story that soon begins could scarcely be surpassed. Here Mr. Quick rises to poetic heights, and the clean days and nights with Virginia, spent in the forest, are described with a sense of the sacred quality of the unfolding romance of the two happy young people. But a tragic separation comes, and the lad is forced on to other neighborhoods, always further to that land of promise just over the next hill or beyond the next prairie. Innumerable folk cross his adventurous path, and there are feuds and frenzies, jealousies and hates revealed, and there come days and years of heart hunger in the magic of that endlessly stretching land which ever beckons the ambitious boy. A prairie fire, a snow storm that the movies would envy, and pulsating rides through darkness and rains to avoid unfriendly encounters—these all form a part of the vast panorama which Mr. Quick has carefully conceived, never once losing the temper of the times.

How well he writes, when he speaks of nature in these virgin places! Chapter XIII begins with this beautifully wrought paragraph:

"The next day was a wedding day—the marriage morning of the plow and the sod. It marked the beginning of the subdual of that wonderful wild prairie of Vandemark Township and the Vandemark farm. No more fruitful espousal ever took place than that—when the polished steel of my new breaking plow was embraced by the black soil, with its lovely fell of greenery. Up to that fateful moment the prairie of the farm and of the township had been virgin sod; but now it bowed its neck to the yoke of wedlock. Nothing like it takes place any more, for the sod of the meadows and pastures is quite a different thing from the untouched skin of the original earth. Breaking prairie was the most beautiful, the most epochal and most hopeful, and as I look back at it, in one way the most pathetic thing man ever did, for in it one of the loveliest things ever created began to come to its predestined end."

In these days of rushing motors and flashing movies it is indeed refreshing to open a leisurely book that seems to have been written for the sheer joy of it, to find a writer like Herbert Quick who cares for the right word, for his craftsmanship, for the grace and dignity of his style. His novel should meet with a royal welcome. I believe it was serialized in a woman's magazine. I am glad that our editors are coming to see that it is not always the flaming story of mere sensation which will hold their readers. Thank heaven there are thousands of us still left who like to walk serenely with our author and dream with him of far and splendid years like these!

A Labor Dictionary

WHAT'S WHAT IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT. Compiled by Waldo R. Browne. Published by B. W. Huebsch. $4.

THIS is at once a popular and a comprehensive dictionary of the modern labor movement. Terms are accurately defined; theories are clarified; the most important developments of the international labor movement are sketched in brief outline. There is even a glossary of the slang which has become an integral part of labor terminology. To glance through the volume is to refresh one's memory on a thousand doubtful points which are coming up in the press every day.

Stocks

A Study of the Market

THE STOCK MARKET. By S. H. Huebner, Ph. D. D. Appleton & Co. Price, $2.50.

DR. HUEBNER is professor of commerce at the University of Pennsylvania and has written three authoritative books on insurance. The present book on the stock market is in the form of a text book.

The book covers a wide range and is divided into four parts: Services Rendered by the Organized Stock Market; Organization and Operation of the Market; Factors Affecting Security Prices and Values, and Legal Principles Governing the Stock Exchange Business. In addition, there are eighty pages of appendices, which, as a reference book, would be well worth buying for people who are comparatively unfamiliar with investments. It covers just such questions as are continually being asked by people who have money to invest or have had investments left them. For instance, it gives a classification and description of stock certificates, sample forms for stock, bonds, stock allotment warrants, etc., the listing requirements of the New York Stock Exchange, commissions charged on the Stock Exchange etc.

The first chapter of Dr. Huebner's book is a nineteen-page description of the nature and scope of the stock market and, so far as we know, there has been no equally comprehensive description as simply and succinctly written on this subject.

For those who already know the simpler technique of the market, Dr. Huebner's chapter on Arbitrage, which he sometimes barbarously calls Arbitraging, will be of special interest.

The description of financial panics and business depression is somewhat disappointing, in that it goes over old ground without adding anything new and without attempting to turn the opera glasses the other way. Discussions of cycles of prosperity and depression almost invariably deal with the past, picking out from the picture those details which prove to be suggestive and leaving out of the picture all that mass of detail which the man who actually faces the future and requires to lay a course for himself sees in unaccented confusion.

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