The Sunday Tribune's News and Reviews of Books and Authors

Another Pretty Lady

By Burton Rascoe

LILIAN. By Arnold Bennett. Published by the George H. Doran Company. New York: 1922.

THIS is the lightest and most didactic book Mr. Bennett has ever written. He wishes to teach us that it is possible for a personable young woman to exploit her charms without benefit of clergy and not come to a bad end. But few of us, except Mr. Bennett, ever doubted it. One wonders why he is so vehement about it. One wonders why he contrasts Lilian with every one in the novel who is not minded to order her life in Lilian's fashion so much to Lilian's glory and her foils' disadvantage. He calls them frumps and dowds and all sorts of things. He makes them out to be cats and cowards, snakes in the grass and unfortunate, unhappy, mean spirited girls and women. So much emphasis is not necessary, I think, to convince the toughest minded of the reasonableness of his unimportant little thesis. Lilian is very likeable and interesting and self-sufficient without so many oblique compliments.

Lilian is the daughter of a middle class proprietor of an art school. Mr. Bennett wishes to tell us at this point that because one identifies himself with art, runs an art school and even paints pictures which are accepted and hung by the Royal Academy one may be a dub and an ignoramus of the worst possible sort. Lilian's father does all these things and he was without talent or appreciation or anything except that "he had realized his own ambitions and was a merry soul sunk in contentment. The world held nothing that he wanted and did not possess. He looked up to the upper classes without envy or jealousy, and read about them with ingenuous joy. He had no instinct for any sort of elegance" He lost his money through bad judgment on the market and died without a penny. He had kept Lilian home to look at, and she had not learned to earn her living. She was thrown upon the world.

The situation is perilous, because, as Mr. Bennett has been careful to point out, Lilian had precisely what her father did not have—a taste for elegance. The manner in which Mr. Bennett uses that phrase leaves you in no doubt but that Mr. Bennett also possesses that taste. Lilian is fascinated by beautiful clothes. Mr. Bennett knows women's clothes as well as Mr. Hergesheimer, perhaps even better, because Mr. Bennett was once the editor of a woman's fashion magazine. Lilian gets a job as a typist in an all-night typing establishment. It seems that they have such things in London. An elegant young man comes in at 2 o'clock one morning with some work to do. Lilian thought: "He must be a man-about-town, a clubman, the genuine article." The man, Mr. Bennett tells us, "would have been overdressed had he not worn his marvellous and costly garments with absolute naturalness and simplicity." Lilian instinctively pats her coiffure. One would think that this elegant, genuine article would be Lilian's destiny; but he is only part of it. He merely adds fuel to Lilian's enkindled ambition for elegance. She runs away, you may be surprised to hear, with her employer, a middle aged man, who has taken her out to dinner, kissed her in a taxi and undertaken the job of making her, because, as he imparts to her, "a woman wants making. Only a man can make a woman. She has to be formed; she can't do it herself." Lilian, Mr. Bennett tells us, is not in love, but she is grateful. The woman maker takes her to the most elegant of places, the Riviera. There his job becomes a matter for the most delicate technique; he makes her a mistress of the art of love. One cannot but admire his proficiency and Lilian's docility. Although Lilian knows all the preciosities of amour, she does not, Mr. Bennett suggests, know their deep, their vital meaning; one presumes that Mr. Bennett will permit her to find this meaning in a sequel to this novel. The great tutor develops, conveniently, a mortal pneumonia, and on his deathbed he is informed that there is to be a child. Again he is generous: he turns over his typing establishment to Lilian. Thus is Lilian able to lord it over the cats who have been gossiping about her. Once in charge she orders a layette of the most elegant materials.

A very light story, you will agree, Mr. Bennett's very lightest. But it is told with a narrative skill and sprightliness that never deserts Mr. Bennett. He is a Peter Pan among novelists, always eager, curious, enthusiastic, impressed, ingenuous. He is most ingenuous when he tells us in what elegance consists. I think it was the late great Dixon Scott who described Mr. Bennett as the perpetual yokel just come to the big city, eyes staring and mouth agape at elegance. That is one of his greatest charms. I said a moment ago that Mr. Bennett contrasts all the other women in the novel to Lilian to their disadvantage. That is not quite true: Miss Grig, sister and partner of the proprietor of the typing establishment, comes off honorably. She is wholly unattractive; but she is a sensible and understanding woman. She suffers from various wasting ailments, but she has a heart of gold. And though one might wish that Mr. Bennett had spared us some of her physical shortcomings, one is drawn to her almost wholeheartedly. Miss Grig, convincingly, adores her brother and wishes to look out for his interests; but she acknowledges in the grand manner the change in power in the typing establishment. No one ever said "The King is dead! Long live the Queen" with better grace. And perhaps Mr. Bennett's characterization of Felix Grig is more of a work of art than I have indicated. It just doesn't seem story. The story is fluffy and light and puffballish.

"The Goose Man"

By A. Donald Douglas

THE GOOSE MAN. By Jacob Wasserman. Translated by Allen W. Porterfield. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

AT A TIME when he was most beset by all the corrupting flattery of fame and love Christian Wahnschaffe tore the veil of loveliness from the deceptive appearances of Nature and looked into the dungeoned anguish of the heart of life. "He walked to the window. He saw the whole space of heaven before him, the evening star and the unresting sea. And he knew that it was all illusion, this great peace, this glittering star, this gently phosphorescent deep, that it was but a garment and a painted curtain by which the soul must not let itself be quieted. Behind it were terror and horror and unfathomable pain. He understood, he understood at last."

After his nightmare dialogue with the rusty devil of eternity Ivan Karamazoff understood at last. The understanding toppled him to madness. Christian Wahnschaffe suffered no such merciful escape from the rack of the tough world. In the slime of fundamental evil, in that fearful confession of Niels Heinrich, Christian faced the ultimate and inexorable horror of existence. He understood that all the rapt beauty of life is founded in dissonance and pain and infinite despair.

* * *

The world revealed by Wassermann in "The World's Illusion" and "The Goose Man" is neither the counting room of fashionable intelligence, nor a problem to be solved by the pragmatic method. It offers none of the poisonous attractions of golden-hued romance, or the spurious consolations of a specific program of reform. The romance goes down into subterranean chambers haunted by the powers of darkness. The solution dawns only after a night of dread. This world glows only from an inner light like a lantern borne across a desolate moor beleaguered by goblins and yet poignantly beautiful under the cynical indifference of the heavens. You can not approach Wassermann in an attitude of condescension and a credulous levity. In an age of thin bright surfaces and fountainous garrulity, of fragile porcelain and copyrighted hardware, he is a cloudy sorcerer who conjures up the profound dream of life hovering always between the sunlighted uplands and the vile abyss.

Beneath the forms and gestures of a society organized for common plunder and benefit lies and will ever lie the primeval mystery of the creative need. The soul is prisoned in the confinement of the desirous flesh and must choose between the shows of the world and the devouring ghosts who clamor for visible embodiment in sound or color. Daniel Nothafft in "The Goose Man" is something more important than an architect of polyphony, a difficult man wrung with life, more than the man who breaks the heart of his first wife, cannot endure the world of commoners, tolerates the presence of the execrable witch-woman, Philippina, marries Eleanore to lose her in childbirth, marries Dorothea to lose her in infidelity and lives even through the destruction of his finest music. At no time is he a Jean-Christophe who would debase the miraculous grail of music into a symbol for reconciling the nations of Europe.

* * *

Like all great creative artists, he walks in a world of shadows hooding his heart in inscrutable gloom until they are woven from his vitals into patterns of colored sound. In spiritual stature he exceeds even the allegorical figure of the Goose Man, his other self, who, unlike the devil to Ivan Karamazoff, effects his final acceptance of life. Ivan respectfully returns the ticket. By process of a vision Daniel is reconciled to the world of common benevolence and common doom. Christian Wahnschaffe arrives at the deepest comprehension of all by being in the world without being of the world. In so far "The Goose Man" does not compass the maturity of "The World's Illusion," nor in its finest passages do you catch that mournful accent of illimitable beauty and sorrow which made "The World's Illusion" hardly less exquisite and marvelous a tone-poem than Richard Strauss' "Don Quixote" or the Liebestod from "Tristan." The difference between "The World's Illusion" and "The Goose Man" is the difference between "Tristan" and Franck's D minor symphony, between the beauty which is steeped in sorrow and the more unyielding severity which itself postulates the bitter core of loveliness.

In a Wassermann novel the moral exists only in deep implication and presentment, and never in that facile display of theories and mortuary ideas so cultivated by middlemen philosophers at dinner parties. The huge "intellectual" discussion of musical values in "Jean-Christophe" is in itself a confession of an incurable wrongness of idea. Whether it be dressed up in chromatic, or tonic and dominant, or the whole-tone scale, music is neither more than less than music. It does not exist to level the barriers of caste and nation, or to inspire kindliness in parents and seduction in young men. In the words of "The Goose Man": "The breath of God, the annunciation of infernal darkness, the wonders of temporal existence, peals of thunder and sweet weavings of sound music."

In both "The World's Illusion" and "The Goose Man" you are come to the gates of the true gods who spin the heartless mystery of life from the very anguish of a world of intolerable beauty.

MAJOR STEDE BONNET

An illustration from "Pirates," by C. Lovat Fraser (McBride)

Discovering Columbus

By Isabel Paterson

1492. By Mary Johnson. Little, Brown & Co.

AMERICAN authors in general are often reproached for allowing popularity and the prospect of quick gain to debase their talents by a too facile and copious output, but the honorable exceptions, against whom the charge obviously will not lie, are seldom given any credit for their unmercenary labors. Mary Johnson is one of these exceptions.

She began with a best seller and followed it with several more. But they were not written as such. I do not mean that she despises popular approval; that is absurd. But she wrote what she had it in her to write, and her interest and fresh enthusiasm, her narrative gift and feeling for colorful incident, naturally commended her to a large public. Hers were among the first, and probably the best, of American historical novels. They were romantic because she has the romantic mind; but they were purely American, without any flavor of Wardour Street or the second hand. When her mind turned to the past her heart clung to her native state. If the picture of early days in Virginia presented in "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope" were a trifle overdrawn and superficial, those are the faults of youth.

She might have gone on turning out stories of the same pattern indefinitely at an immense pecuniary profit. Romance will always sell and is always in fashion. But she was not content. She followed the clue of history on to the second and inevitable time of stress in America, the Civil War. Her two novels of that period, "The Long Roll" and "Cease Firing," are infinitely richer than her earlier books, if less easily readable. They are almost overloaded with the fruits of research, with realistic detail. She had gone in that direction as far as she could.

A third period of development is marked by her latest novel, "1492." By it she proves, if proof be needed, that self-denial, the hard way in writing, is worth while. It is by odds the best novel she has ever written; and what is more, it gives promise of better yet to come. Heretofore she has dispayed in turn great fertility of invention and an infinite capacity for taking pains; but this is a work of imagination, which is to say, it is touched with genius.

Not that it is by any means flawless. On the contrary, it is full of faults, both of form and of style. It is sometimes heavy, sometimes ragged; generally shapeless. It moves to a staccato measure which at times becomes monotonous. But it is right in essence, in intention, in feeling; it has a vitality of its own. It shows you a living man.

And the man had been dead so long, had so faded away into a vaporous legend, that to make him live again was little short of a miracle.

* * *

The man, of course is Christopher Columbus; 1492 can mean only one thing to Americans, being one of three dates, or maybe now four, that are all most of us know of that branch of statistics. In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue, etc. Further we are dimly acquainted with the fact that Columbus sailed in search of the Indies, not of any new continents dimly guessed. But the dry fact does not prevent us having a hazy mental picture of the doughty Christopher leaping ashore, after the tedium of the long voyage, with a smile and the remark: "So this is America."

We have never given him any measure of sympathy or comprehension as a fallible human creature, doggedly following his star from court to court of Europe for seventeen weary years before ever he got his ship headed West across the Atlantic, and at the end as much perplexed by what he did not find as by what he found. We have never speculated much on what kind of a man it took to discover America. Miss Johnson has; and I for one believe that her conclusions are in the main correct. Her Columbus could have done it.

Consider his necessary qualities. Practically, he must be an expert navigator, of course; a man who could feel the very moods of the sea. In no other sense could he be truly practical at all, else he would have thriftily turned that professional skill to a more certain profit, been content to sail to the Indies by the known route. He must be a visionary then, even with a touch of megalomania, for nothing less was enough in the way of self-confidence to enable a man to brave the terrors of the unknown. And he must be able to manage men, or he could not be a shipmaster and hold his crew on such a perilous voyage. Yet with limitations to his power in that direction, or he would not have been supplanted after he had achieved so much. All these things Miss Johnson shows him—shows him in action, mind you, as is essential to the making of good fiction.

Then he must have some indication of this personality in his outward appearance. He could not be commonplace. Here is her portrait of him: "A tall, strongly made, white-haired man. The silver hair was too soon. . . . He had a long, fair face that might once have been tanned and hardened by great exposure. But now the bronze was faded. . . . Across the high nose and cheekbones went a powdering of freckles. His eyes were bluish gray and habitually looked at things afar off. . . . He was rather poorly dressed." This was Columbus, the suppliant for ships, but a lordly suppliant, demanding in advance a bond to be made admiral if he found what he sought.

* * *

All through the story Miss Johnson keeps him in character. No other of her figures is drawn in the round and in colors, so to speak; but he is. And the physical aspects of the voyage, and of the new land, are depicted with an equal clarity and completeness. Perhaps this is intentional. There is no plot to the book, and one perceives it would be out of place. That is, it would be dwarfed into absurdity by the magnitude of the main theme. There is symbolism, no doubt, in the way the story is told, as by an eyewitness, one Jayme de Marchena, who for good reason chose to call himself Juan Lepe. De Marchena is a refugee from the bigotry which then had the Old World fast; therefore, a forerunner of those who were to form the nucleus of the New World. But his personality is but dimly indicated.

To dwell on these shortcomings, if such they be, is ungracious, when the positive qualities are so notable. There is alloy, but there is gold. To read such a book is to be sensibly enriched.

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The Wonderful Little People

By Achmed Abdullah

IN LOTUS-LAND JAPAN. By Herbert G. Ponting. Dutton.

THE MAKING OF MODERN JAPAN. By J. H. Gubbins. C. M. G. Lippincott.

MR. HERBERT G. PONTING'S "In Lotus-Land Japan" is all that the title implies and then some—if you get what I mean. Negatively speaking it is, taken in conjunction with Mr. Ziegfeld's Follies—chiefly the third girl in the second row, counting from the left—with Fifth Avenue on an early autumn morning and the filet de sole meuniere at Delmonico's, a final reason why men do not leave home but stay on the Island of Manhattan. Mr. Ponting's Japan is not the land which, to quote George Ade, "figured once on fans and screens, but now is figuring on the Philippines," nor the home of the man who "once was a cute little bit of a Jap, but now is a tough little war-making chap."

It is not the Japan which has stanchly carried on, through the infiltration of Chinese culture, the Kamakura Shogunate, the anomalies of the Duarchy, Kublai Khan's Tartar adventure and failure, the War of the Chrysanthemums, the blighting friction between the imperial court and the Yeddo government, the coming of the Dutch, the foreign intervention, the foisting of an alien industrialism and an alien constitution, and the conflicts with China and Russia, until to-day, first among modern Asian countries, it has attained the position where it treats with Occidental powers on a footing of equality, at times a little more than equality.

It is not the Japan of panicky Lothrop Stoddards and California chambers of commerce in whose sultry dreams small but hard-boiled Nipponese samurais wave two-handed swords, cry "Hitogoroshi! Hitogoroshi! —Kill! Kill!" and pounce upon a supine and peaceful Western world with a super-Prussian efficiency and the biological threat that, hereafter, all babies on this side of the Pacific must be born with butter-yellow skin, smooth, black hair and glistening slit-eyes.

It is not the Japan of the Philadelphia Satevepost's lady correspondents of Indianese ancestry and refinement to whom the Mikado in person gives polite assurance that all he wants in life is to be interviewed by the said lady and the promise that his picture will be printed between Strate-Form Korsets and "Burlap Tobacco—smoke it, boy—it stultifies!" Nor, finally, is it the Japan of the artist, of Pierre Loti and Yvonne Vernon and Hermann Hesse, of Petrucci and M. A. Hincks and Sei-ichi Taki, or, less vicariously, more creatively, of Korin and Harunobu and Sheraku and of the exquisite craftsmen who gave to the world the porcelains of Hirado, Satsuma and Nabeshido.

Mr. Ponting's Japan is the Japan of Chautauqua. It is, including the profuse illustrations, the Japan of the hand-colored picture postcard printed in Leipsic, of geishas who somehow remind me of Mack Sennett's bathing beauties, of dainty cherry blossom festivals that would cause Mr. Volstead himself to long for the solace and kick of a pony of cherry brandy.

Lots of people—people who will never see this review—will buy it. They will like it. They will put it on the old Hepplewhite table next to the wing-cheek chair, directly beneath grand-dad's genuine oil painting with the whiskers and the volunteer uniform. Their hearts will swell with patriotic pride when they read how Commodore Perry knocked at the gates of Japan, and how all the little O-Levy-sans and O-Sullivan-sans and geishas and shojis and ichibans and samisens and kimonos kowtowed and sucked in their breath and invited the Commodore to step into the parlor and visit for a spell. Personally I could never discover much heroism in threatening a charming bit of porcelain with a popgun, and so when these latter days the charming bit of porcelain has turned into steel by a process of international alchemy and causes a great deal of worry to the Californians and the Australasians, I do not blame the Elder Statesmen, but Commodore Perry, or rather the President of the United States who instructed him to take "whatever course he thought best, force if necessary, to secure certain trading *privileges* (the italics are my own) from Japan."

The same people who will buy the book will adore its style—incidentally, nor do I mean to be a cat, am I betting odds-on that the author is either a Harrow-bred Briton or an American-born Rhodes scholar of the pollyannerish variety—and they will just love its "gladsome throngs," its "April beaming with joyous buds," its "fair maidens who are models of well-bred elegance," its "resilient foliage" and its interpolated bits of poetry about "raptured groups" standing "spellbound by the cherry blossoms."

The book is sweetly tolerant and condescending. The author plays cricket from cover to cover. Never once does he use a crude if effective baseball bat. But if anybody should write as sweetly tolerant a tome about my own native Afghan hills I would kill him in a lengthy and humorous Chinese manner and afterward, once every year, defile his grave. And there is not a jury of twelve men good and true between Yonkers and Sandy Hook which would not recommend me to the mercy of the court.

* * *

Quite different is the land of Mr. J. H. Gubbins' "The Making of Modern Japan." He is, by the way, the same Gubbins, formerly first and Japanese secretary of the British Embassy in Tokio, who some time ago published the monumental three-volume dictionary of Chinese-Japanese words in the Japanese language, a work to be compared as to logical, scholarly finesse and philological exactness only to John Richardson's famous eighteenth century dictionary of Persian, Arabic and English, and to Dr. Savary's Arabic grammar published by orders of Napoleon I —and be it remembered that to this day, for the acquisition of the latter two books, staid Oxford dons of Magdalen and Brazenose kilt up their robes and engage in fistic combats on High Street.

Mr. Gubbins's volume, concise, short, with not a word too much or too little, is more than the title suggests, for it gives in the opening chapters a concrete tabloid history of Japan. It is fair in judgment and interpretation without either gushing or patronizing. It has complete and brilliantly written accounts of Japan's religions, cultural ideals, complex feudal systems, educational institutions and governmental theories and practices.

It contains splendid character sketches of such men as Prince Iwakura, Okubo Ichizu, Prince Ito, Marquis Matsaguta, Field Marshal Oyama and General Prince Katsura. It dissects, more clearly than any volume on the subject that I have ever happened across, Japan's troublous feudal period, its causes and latter-day reactions and reflexes, and the meaning and consequences of modern industrialism. It gives, in the twenty-eighth chapter, an extraordinary clear comparison of modern Japan and imperial Germany, of the Twenty-one Demands and the Lansing-Ishii agreement. Yet, for all that, it is a book even for the layman. It never makes the academic mistake of presupposing in the reader either too much fact knowledge or too much idiocy. It is written with symmetry, proportion and measure.

The book belongs on a workaday shelf between Buckle and Guizot, and doubtless by the end of the year its pages will be very much thumb marked.

KN

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An Inspiring Autobiography

By Stanton A. Coblentz

THE STORY OF A VARIED LIFE. By W. S. Rainsford. Doubleday, Page & Co.

"I AM NOT writing the story of my life for scholars," says W. S. Rainsford, in the introduction to this book. "I can make no claims to scholarship myself. I am writing for my friends, for those I lived among, worked for and learned to love—and who loved me." In this statement is perhaps to be found the reason why "The Story of a Varied Life" is a successful autobiography. Above all else it is a human document; it is the tale of one who struggled incessantly and aspired mightily, and yet never withdrew his hand from the great throbbing pulse of humanity.

For Dr. Rainsford's career as a preacher was distinguished by the intimacy of his contact with the members of all classes, by his actual application of the doctrine that "all men are brothers." He himself was reared amid humble surroundings in Ireland, and he never forgot his love of the common people nor his appreciation of the virtues of the common man, although his career was to bring him in close contact with multimillionaires and to offer temptations that a man of coarser caliber would have had difficulty in resisting.

In common with so many other autobiographies, Dr. Rainsford's book is particularly vivid and effective in the opening chapters. It is as if the memory of age lingers with peculiar tenderness in remote dawnlit valleys, as if there is an added glow and mellowness in youth as observed through the dimness of many ears. Certainly, there is more that is real, more that is humanly appealing, in the first quarter of the book and we warm a little more quickly toward Rainsford, the child and the struggling youth, than we do toward Rainsford, the active and successful rector of a great church.

Perhaps the reason is that certain incidents in Rainsford's early life stand out as peculiarly touching and significant. For example, he relates how once, when he was a child, sick at heart and lonely, his mother devoted a whole morning to walking with him and instilling him with fresh hope.

* * *

One regrets that the chapters concerning Rainsford's childhood are necessarily few. Passing on to the stormier period of his youth, we see him as a boy in London, as a traveler in southern France, and later as an explorer of the great unmapped wilderness of Western Canada. We observe him making his choice of professions, and by slow degrees deciding to be a minister; we watch him taking his final leave of England, serving as an alien missioner in New York, accepting an appointment in Toronto, and finally returning to New York to receive the rectorship of St. George's, which, in the course of years, he developed into one of the greatest parishes in the country.

If Dr. Rainsford has any one outstanding message to deliver, it is a message of optimism, of courage and of faith in humanity. In particular his message is one of faith in the poor. "Those who despair of human nature," he remarks, "do not know the poor. For, among the poor, cynicism is much less common than among other classes, and a spirit of sympathy and helpfulness is far more prevalent." In support of this belief Dr. Rainsford cites many interesting and vivid examples: the story of a boy of eighteen who went hungry for a month so that his mother could have $3 with which to engage a physician; the tale of a man under thirty, who gave up his trade and nearly starved so as to give personal attention to a mother fast lapsing into imbecility.

Surely, one cannot read of such sacrifice and devotion without feeling faith in the ultimate soundness of human nature; surely, one cannot but believe that Dr. Rainsford is largely right when he says: "If you want to help men themselves, trust them! If you want to get the best they can give you, trust them! No man, no matter how gifted, can finally succeed if he will not trust his fellow man."

The author make it evident that he himself is accustomed to trusting men. No member of the great parish was so humble but that he might without difficulty see the rector personally and lay his problems unhesitatingly at the minister's feet. Certainly, this was democracy—not the democracy of gilded words, but the more effective democracy of action. And that Dr. Rainsford was consistent in support of his principles may be demonstrated by a single instance. At one time Pierpont Morgan, a close friend of Rainsford's, proposed that the size of the vestry be so reduced as to place it virtually beneath the thumb of the great financier. Rainsford, objected, on the plea of democracy, and waged so vigorous a war against Morgan's policy that for a while his relations with the banker were severed. In thus jeopardizing his friendship with Morgan, Rainsford had nothing personally to gain and much to lose, but in fighting for what he believed to be the right he manifested the qualities responsible for making his life one of inspiration and accomplishment, rather than the miserable story it might have been had he been wont to sacrifice principle to expediency.

F. Scott Fitzgerald says

of "The Love Legend"

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From the Literary Review New York Evening Post.

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