LITERARY NEWS, VIEWS AND CRITICISM

WRITES A TAME NOVEL OF HAPPY FAMILY LIFE

Josephine Daskam Bacon Thought It High Time for One.

HOME HARDEST TO RUN

Too Much Leisure the Trouble With Women of To-day, She Thinks.

Josephine Daskam Bacon has just written a new book, "The Inheritance"—always an interesting event. But in this instance, and in these feministic days, it is more interesting than usual, for the new book deals primarily with a family, a family of the old ashioned type, and with individuals and individualism at a discount.

"Why did you do it?" Mrs. Bacon was asked. And back of the question there evidently was a vague wonder that any writer, however brave and opinionated, should dare do such a thing.

"Because I thought it was high time for the family to be noticed somewhat," was her brisk answer.

"Oh, I know," she went on, "that it's not the thing to do these days. And I suppose I've done a very rash, unusual thing in writing a quiet story that just runs smoothly along, telling how the children romped and played, and went to school, and had the measles, and grew up, and how they went on picnics and emptied the lunch baskets. And as for the heroine, she's more impossible yet; the women won't like her at all, I fear. She's such a healthy, normal, cheerful sort of creature, making the home bright and cozy, and with no interesting temperamental strokes.

"Men will like to read of her, I think, for they like such women—they are comfortable to live with. But men, alas, are not the readers of fiction. Women are the great novel buyers, and why they flock to the thin, green eyed heroines with yearnings or temperaments or unseemly habits I don't know. They wouldn't want to have such women living in the same house with them, for they surely would be very undesirable to have underfoot. It seems to be a morbid craving. And women like to come across something they don't understand. They think it's deep. More likely its plain muzzy. No one could understand it."

"You're evidently not in sympathy with——"

It was like shaking a red flag. Mrs. Bacon is *not* in sympathy with many and various of the manifestations with which Woman—with the capital stressed—is at present endeavoring to indicate her awakening from a long lethargy. Mrs. Bacon, who is herself a handsome, brilliantly capable appearing woman of the physical type of her own brunette heroine in "The Inheritance," speaks easily in crisp language and with an assured manner.

"The trouble with the women seems to be that they have too much leisure on their hands. I say seems, for I don't know. But it must be that they have or they couldn't find time to be running Wilson and Bull Moose clubs and strange Oriental cults and offices neatly pigeonholed and everything else besides their homes.

"As a matter of fact a home is the hardest thing in the world to run, and I think that is the main reason they are so anxious to get away from trying to run it. For few, very few of them have mastered the art. Talk to them and see. Look at their homes and see. How many of them know that a family can be fed on the best meat for 14 cents a day apiece? How many know that all the butter, milk, cream and cheese necessary for a family of eight can be got from two cows? And how many of them would keep and keep track of the cows, anyway, if they lived in a place where they could?

"No, the women are restless and uneasy and they're looking after an easier job. I'm sure that I can earn a good living at any of half a dozen trades, with one hand tied behind my back. But it requires all my energy and resource to make the best home of which I'm capable. To know how to get the best results in every department, to know to a cent how much is expended for this and for that—that is my business, and it is not an easy business.

"But, to my mind, it's the finest business in the world, and always has been the most important. If women can keep it up to its highest standard, and still have time to go down to an office or paint pic res or write books or what not, well and good. But as for the women who protest that they have outgrown the restrictions of the home—and who, in reality, are too lazy and too incompetent for it——"

Very evidently, these advanced members make the author tired.

Yet she is an author, a prominent and successful one, this protagonist for the home and the home woman. How does she account for herself?

"You see I'm unusually capable," she answered in explanation; she said it modestly and in assuming tones of matter of fact realization. "I'm healthy. I have endurance. I can have children, keep my house, write stories and still have time on my hands to attend a few committee meetings if I want to. In fact, I have attended them and have been amazed at the ignorance and incompetence displayed by the most of these women who have outgrown their homes.

"But my writing has always been a subsidiary issue. And I can read proof perfectly well and keep my children's noses wiped at the same time. That's my blessing that I can do literary work in the midst of my everyday life and duties and do not require seclusion or picturesque isolation as many writers seem to.

"I don't know what's the matter with the writers, they seem to be such sickly, neurasthenic folk. You are constantly hearing how one has had to go off into some favorite place alone to get his work done and how another has gone to have an operation and another a divorce.

"And as for the women of them, the women writers and painters and singers and other persons who think they haven't time to lower themselves into becoming mothers and home makers, perhaps it is just as well they think so, they do. Their twins would probably have good to inherit, helping it on to its development. It takes time and love and devotion to carry on this work at its best, and those women who are not willing to give it are probably not causing much less in not producing, claiming but as for their saying they are producing something finer and nobler——"

Mrs. Bacon admits that she once made a mistake, from a best seller point of view, when she made the heroine of an extremely popular serial, "Margarita's Soul," cheerfully give up an operatic career to devote herself to her husband, children and home. Letters of protest flowed in to the magazine office which printed the novel, and they were all from women who deeried this letting down of principle. But as Margarita made a first class wife and mother, even as good as she had been a prima donna, Mrs. Bacon maintains she did the right thing.

Mrs. Bacon regrets her exploitation as an anti-suffragist.

"The suffrage is but a minor issue of a widespread movement," she said, "and it is a pity that it is used for a general tag. I personally am not an advocate of suffrage, because I believe that women are neglecting a great many vital things they have not succeeded in handling in order to run after the ballot box. But that does not mean that I am not in favor of a great many advances for women that are commonly and mistakenly listed under the suffrage head. And I would demand a great many privileges that the suffragists have not dreamed of asking.

"A vital point is financial independence rather than the privilege of going and casting a vote. That is a real problem and a big one, one that is making much for unhappiness in married life to-day. But so distorted is the view at the present that whether one is for suffrage or against is used to tag one's whole attitude toward women, their resources and their activities and their ambitions."

NEW BOOKS.

Continued from Eleventh Page.

thoroughly readable novel. The scene of action is laid in Canada, but the reader will not be pestered with the unintelligible fiction dialect of the habitant. There is indeed little dialect in this story and what is there is quite comprehensible. But there is an abundance of the open air atmosphere of the north and there are scenes in which one can almost feel the sharp sting of the snow in his face.

The daughter of Marcus Holbeach is a captivating little heroine, alive with rich impulse and opulently equipped with sensibility and charm. She is womanly through and through, and no one will wonder for a moment at her easy conquest of a sturdy northern handicraftsman such as the hero of this tale. These are not the only interesting people in the drama, however, for Esther, the friend of the heroine, is only second to her in admirable qualities. Esther's mother, too, is most ingratiating and there is a weak and repentant old father who learns too late that he has not been half as bad as he thought he was.

All the personages in the narrative are thrown into interesting relations with one another, and there is a really well knit and plausible plot. A novel which combines good construction with interesting character drawing ought to chain the attention of any lover of good fiction. This story is so straightforward, so sincere and so human that it should certainly gain a wide circle of readers. Let it be added that it is also in general well written, albeit this item will count for less than it would have counted in the earlier days of our literature.

On a Blessed Island.

It has been intimated that in "The Sanctuary," by Maud Howard Peterson (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company), there was a timeliness shown forth in the author's delineation of the hero in the act of leading a double life. A man of wealth profoundly interested in the position of the laboring man, he himself under an assumed name and an assumed suit of clothes goes into a factory and works. But this is not at all germane to the real story. In fact nothing tangible comes of it. The real story deals with the same rich man's love for the daughter of the owner of the factory.

It transpires that the leader of the double life has also a third existence inasmuch as he has an insane wife shut up in an asylum in Canada. The existence of this wife is the obstacle to the happiness of the man and the daughter of the factory owner. The insane woman regains her reason and then she hungers to return to the home of her childhood on a certain French island in the Mediterranean. There she has a castle and there she is the last of an ancient race of nobles.

How the daughter of the wealthy American goes to that same island in search of peace, how she absorbs wisdom from a very good old priest, who could be a Cardinal if he would only desert that island, how she meets the restored wife and how they become friends and how the restored wife considerately develops symptoms of consumption, all these things are fully set forth in the pages of Miss Peterson's novel.

The characters in this story are clearly drawn and the incidents are by no means badly planned. The chief fault of the book is that the writer has striven too much to emphasize its sentiment and at times has dropped into a melodramatic style which reminds the reader of Ouida and Marie Corelli. But this is confessedly romance, and we must not ask for too much realism. The good old priest, one of the most enduring characters in fiction, is admirably presented, and the once insane wife is an interesting person. There is an angel boy named Anthony. There does not seem to be any imperative call for his presence. It is a pity that the sensitive reader could not have been spared this infant phenomenon. He is not an ornament to the story.

Why She Left Home.

Archibald Marshall has turned out in "The Squire's Daughter" (Dodd, Mead and Company) one of those extremely neat, womanlike tales of English country life which are so soothing to the nerve racked spirit of this age that they should always command the highest respect and even gratitude. The squire himself is a good, old fashioned, heavy father, who storms around and bullyrags every one in the house, from his wife to the cat, and incidentally undertakes to regulate all the details of his daughter's life.

Jim Graham, a solid, plodding hero, is engaged to the daughter but she is not quite sure that she is engaged to him. In fact, she is not really sure of anything. But she does feel that this life is one eternal bore and she wishes in vain that she could in some way stir things up.

About this time enter a famous explorer who is not a gentleman. He is a throwback to the era of the cave dwellers and a hearty believer in marriage by capture. So he decides to carry off the squire's daughter and that hesitating young woman, coming unexpectedly into contact with a mind which knows just what it wants, falls an easy victim. She is carried off to London.

Unfortunately for the explorer, Brother Dick, who is an officer in a crack regiment and should therefore be expected to know something about retreats and swift pursuits, sets out after the fleeing couple and at the same time the plodding hero wakes up and accompanies him. The famous explorer's cave man fierceness fades away in the presence of these two calm, determined Britons, and he gives up the foolish girl almost without a whimper.

Then the damsel is taken back to the bosom of her family and soundly lectured by the squire, to whom she makes a solemn promise to be a good girl and never do it any more. Jim Graham, the plodding hero, announces that he wants her more than ever and so everything ends happily, as it always should in a peaceful story of English domestic life in the country.

A Story of the Capital.

"The Woman of It," by Mark Lee Luther (Harpers), is a very readable story of Washington. Without doubt the plot runs toward the creepy regions of melodrama, but this can be forgiven for the excellent reason that several real human beings are concerned in the action and at least one of them is thoroughly lovable. The novel deals with the experiences of a newly elected congressman and his family. His wife is a plain uneducated country woman, and her introduction to the life of the capital is well described.

It is she who finds her way into the affection of the reader. She is troubled from the beginning with doubts of the course chosen by her husband, who has already made a fortune out of the imperial relish invented by her, but who now thinks he has found in the inner shrines of Washington wonderful men ready to help him to become a multimillionaire. In this story it is the man and not the woman who has social ambitions. It is he who sets up an automobile and buys a "palatial mansion."

The wife maintains her simplicity of thought and ideals. She continues to be sound, wholesome and adorable, despite the fact that she cannot speak good English and is unacquainted with the bylaws of high society. All this part of the book is delightful. It seems a pity, therefore, that the author had to introduce a sort of Raffles, who was trying to win the congressman's daughter at the same time he was planning to rob the congressman's safe, and who placed in the household as butler a criminal tool of his own. Of course these two precious scoundrels have to be outwitted by the homespun wife, whose brain is always in good working order.

There is also a daughter in this legislative family and she is sent to a Washington finishing school and speedily transformed into an insufferable young snob. There is at the same school another girl named Philippa, the daughter of a man of tremendous power in the financial and political world. She is not a snob, but that teaches the congressman's daughter nothing. This girl puts Mrs. Congressman on the track of the villainy in the story.

Lastly there is Mr. Congressman's son, who is at Yale and does not signify particularly in himself. But he possesses a bulldog, a real Yale bulldog, who crosses the stage of action only two or three times, but is much more human than some of the people in the drama and altogether lovable. Mr. Luther's story is well written and has briskness of incident to commend it as well as delineation of character.

E. F. Benson Turned Domestic.

The only trouble with the heroine of E. F. Benson's novel "Mrs. Ames" (Doubleday, Page and Company) was that she married a man ten years younger than herself. This unevenly mated pair dwelt in a small and gossiping community. Their lives glided onward in a smooth uneventful manner and doubtless would have continued to glide so until one or the other of them reached its terminus had not Mrs. Ames permitted the evil one to tempt her with social ambition.

She strove valiantly and with no small success to be a leader in her set. She even arranged a social function quite startling to this simple and unoriginal community. It was nothing less than a dinner at which the guests should all be married but none should find his or her own mate present. The husband was to be invited without the wife, or the wife without the husband. It was at this memorable entertainment that Major Ames discovered Mrs. Evans, whose husband was a medical practitioner.

Simultaneously Major Ames and Mrs. Evans learned that their mates did not understand them. Thereupon they took to having private understandings of each other. The radical weakness in their little scheme was that Mrs. Evans really fell in love with Major Ames, while he only yielded to the weakness of a man flattered by a woman's attention.

Nevertheless, in the course of time they prepared for what the immortal Mulvaney described as an "evasion." But Mrs. Ames discovered everything and told her foolish husband that he was not going away. She told Mrs. Evans the same thing. Of course, that ended the story, and there was nothing for them all to do but to continue living their smooth, uneventful lives.

Some New Fiction.

One penalty an artist pays is that of being judged by his best work. The new story by Mr. Eden Phillpotts, "The Lovers" (Rand, McNally and Company), though it is of course readable and interesting, cannot stand comparison with his Devon tragedies nor even with his previous essays in lighter fiction. He has taken no pains in the construction of his plot or in defining his characters, though some of the minor ones are clear cut. His idea apparently was to paint the horrors of the Dartmoor prison in which the captured American sailors were kept in the war of 1812; this giving him the opportunity to discuss the propriety of the breaking away of the colonies, by this time a purely academic theme, we should judge. He brings in two love affairs between Americans and English girls, the lowlier of whom has some life to her. He is far more successful with a wholly subsidiary matter, the exploits of highwaymen, who really should give the title to the story. These exploits may not be very original, but they are spirited and the actors in them are the country folk that Mr. Phillpotts cannot make other

Continued on Thirteenth Page.

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