PERTINENT GOSSIP OF AUTHORS AND THEIR WORK

AUTHOR DISCUSSES "PUBLIC WITH NON-LITERARY TASTES"

JAMES BRANCH CABELL, author of "The Soul of Milicent," has some rather novel views as to the present status of American fiction.

"Perhaps the most striking defect of our modern American literature," said Mr. Cabell, "is the fact that its existence is nowhere apparent. We are, it is true, producing a vast quantity of reading matter whose candidly recognized purpose is to kill time, and which, properly speaking, ought not to be vended over book counters, but rather in drug stores along with the other narcotics.

"It is very well to protest that the class of people who a generation ago read nothing at all now at least read novels, and to regard this as a change for the better. By precisely similar logic it would be more wholesome to breakfast off laudanum than to omit the meal entirely. The nineteenth century, in fact, by making education popular has produced in America the curious spectacle of a reading public with essentially non literary tastes. Formerly better books were published because they were intended for persons who turned to reading through a natural bent of mind, whereas the modern American novel of commerce is addressed to people who read, when they read at all, in violation of every innate instinct.

"Such grounds as yet exist for hopefulness are to be found quite elsewhere than in the crowded market places of fiction, where genuine intelligence panders on all sides to illiteracy and indolence. Yes, that sounds rather cryptic. I mean that two indispensable requisites nowadays of a pecuniarily successful novel are that it make no demand upon the reader's imagination and assume to start with that the reader possesses no information on any subject whatever. The author who writes over the head of the public is the most dangerous enemy of his publisher, and the most insiduous as well, because most publishers would honestly prefer to confine themselves to a higher class of publications were it possible to do so upon the preferable side of bankruptcy.

"Thus no novel which does not deal with modern times is ever really popular among the serious minded. Fancy a tale whose action developed under the rule of the Cæsars or the Merovingians being treated as more than a literary hors d'œuvre! The purchaser of 'vital' novels knows nothing about the period beyond a hazy association of it with the restrictions of the schoolroom; his sluggish imagination instinctively rebels against the labor of forming any notion of such a period; and all the human nature in him is stirred up to resentment against the book's author for presuming to know more than a potential patron. The book, in fine, simply irritates the serious-minded person, and she—for it is only women who willingly brave the terrors of department stores, whence most of our books come nowadays—quite naturally puts it aside in favor of some keen and daring study of American life which is warranted to 'grip' the reader. Yes, modernity of scene is everywhere necessitated as an essential qualification for a book's discussion at the literary evenings of the local women's club—and modernity of scene, of course, is almost always fatal to the permanent worth of fictitious narrative.

"No, it is by no means an original discovery that first class art never reproduces its era. Indeed, in the higher walks of fiction art never reproduces anything, but deals with the facts and laws of life as so much raw material which must be transmuted into comeliness. When Shakespeare pronounced his celebrated dictum about art holding the mirror up to nature he was quite certainly alluding to the circumstance that a mirror reverses all which it reflects. In any event it is droll to consider what the world's literature would be had its makers confined themselves, as we Americans are so sedulously doing, to contemporaneous happenings. In fiction making no author of the first class since Homer's time has ever concerned himself at all with the problems of his particular day; and among geniuses of the second rank you will find such problems adroitly utilized only when they are distorted into enduring parodies of their actual selves by the broad humor of a Dickens or the colossal fantasy of a Balzac. In fiction making the true artist finds an ample if peculiar field wherein the proper functions of a preacher, the ventriloquist, the photographer and the prosecuting attorney are exercised with equal lack of grace.

"Besides, in dealing with modern life a novelist is goaded into two many pusillanimous concessions to plausibility. It was very different in the palmy days when Thackeray was free to play at ducks and drakes with history, and Victor Hugo to reconstruct the whole system of English government, and Scott to cause the sun to set in the east, whenever such minor changes caused to run more smoothly the progress of the tale these giants had in hand. These freedoms are not any longer tolerated in American noveldom, and only a few of us sigh in vain for Thackeray's 'happy, harmless Fable-land, where these things are.' The majority are deep in novelized statistics, wherein arithmetic is palatably seasoned with salaciousness concerning eugenics and white slavery and hereditary diseases and suffrage and similarly repellant topics.

"Now in writing my last book, 'The Soul of Melicent,' I attempted candidly to deal with an epoch and a society, and even a geography, which never existed. I attempted a brief jaunt into that 'happy, harmless Fable-land,' which is bounded by Avalon, and Zenda, and the twin forests of Arden and Morgraunt, and on the west of course by the Hesperides, because I believe this country is the one satisfactory setting for a romantic novel, even though its byways can boast of very little traffic nowadays.

"Meanwhile it is small cause for grief that the reader of American novels and magazines prefers Fifth avenue to the Appian Way and is more at ease in the Tenderloin than in Camelot. We whose tastes happen to be literary are prone to entirely too much long faced prattle about literature, which when all is said is never a controlling factor in anybody's life. The automobile and the telephone, the accomplishments of Mr. Edison and Mr. Burbank and, I might add, of Mr. Rockefeller influence nowadays, in one fashion or another, every moment of every living American's existence; whereas had America produced, instead, a second Milton or a Dante it would at most have caused a few of us to spend a few spare evenings rather differently.

"And besides, we know that America is in fact producing her enduring literature day by day, even though, as is always the case, those who are contemporaneous with its makers cannot with any certainty point them out. To voice a hoary truism, time alone is the test of vitality. In our present flood of printed books, as in any other flood, it is of course the froth and scum which shows most prominently. Yet the desire to write perfectly of beautiful happenings is, as the saying runs, old as the hills—and as immortal. Questionless there was many a serviceable brick wasted in Nineveh because finicky persons must needs be deleting here and there a phrase in favor of its cuneatic synonym, and it is not improbable that when the worn out sun expires in clinkers its final ray will gild such zealots tinkering with their 'style.' Some few there must be in every age and every land of whom life claims nothing very insistently save that they write perfectly of beautiful happenings. And it is such, we know, and such alone who are to-day making in America that portion of her literature which may hope for permanency."

INTERESTING NEW BITS OF LITERARY GOSSIP

Dr. Weir Mitchell's novel "Hugh Wynne" is being put into type for the use of the blind and will soon be issued by the Pennsylvania Institution for the Blind at Pittsburg.

The same institution will bring out this season as a Christmas gift to its pupils the story "The Burgomaster's Christmas," by Jacob A. Riis, which appeared in the *Century* for December, 1909.

The entire first printing of Alfred Noyes's "Collected Poems," published this fall by Stokes, was exhausted in exactly six weeks after publication. And it is reported that although two presses are now busy with the volumes, the supply cannot keep pace with the demand. Five hundred sets, each costing more than twice as much as the average novel, have been ordered in less than a week.

An especially interesting feature of Dr. Joseph K. Dixon's "The Vanishing Race," just published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is the account of the famous Custer fight in 1876 as told by the Indians who took part in the battle. The author has been in charge of the Wanamaker expeditions to study Indian life and history, and his book comes at a favorable time, just as the national memorial to the race is building on Staten Island.

A renewed interest in the works of Oscar Wilde would seem to be indicated by the fact that at the recent exhibit of books of the year a number of his poems were on view. Stokes has just issued "The Happy Prince and Other Fairy Tales," a singularly optimistic expression of the poet, written shortly after his marriage.

Liebler & Company have secured the dramatic right of Ralph Stock's "Marama," which was recently published by Little, Brown & Company. The South Sea Island setting of the story affords unusual opportunities for staging.

Byron is a leading character in Maurice Hewlett's new novel, "Bendish," which has just been published by the Scribners. Tom Moore, Wellington and the poet Rogers also figure. The romance has already run into its second large printing.

Owing to the similarity in names, a few reviews have credited a juvenile volume entitled "Children of the Wild" to Stewart Edward White. The author of the juvenile is named S. E. White, but he is not related to the author of "Gold" and "The Blazed Trail."

The dramatic rights of Jeffery Farnol's "The Amateur Gentleman" have been secured by James K. Hackett. His conception of the pugilist who became a London dandy will be presented to the public directly after the holidays.

In his recently published "Wild Animals at Home," Ernest Thompson Seton defends the character of the much misunderstood skunk and alludes to the sixty pet skunks he keeps at his own home. An amusing anecdote is told of Richard Le Gallienne. The poet not long ago called on Mr. Seton and found the naturalist not at home. However, he rambled about the place and saw the sixty pet skunks, particularly the new and harmless variety, which Seton is trying to breed. So he left the following note:

"With Burbank's praise our ears are dinned,
But Ernest Seton has him skinned:
Now is the thornless cactus beaten
By scentless skunk of Ernest Seton."

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Whose Memoirs Are Published
by Houghton Mifflin Co

Gerald Stanley Lee
Author of "Crowds"
(Doubleday Page & Co)

INDIA

By BETTY DUNDAS.

GREEN, green birds 'gainst a blue sky,
The scream of the parrots as past they fly,
The golden shimmer of hot, hot air,
And an arid plain 'neath the sun's fierce glare.

Shadows lie sharp on the sun baked land,
Nothing but shadows and dry, bare sand;
A yellow dog goes slinking by,
And a blue rock pigeon wheels on high.

And the pilgrims pass in an endless row,
Shuffling, mumbling, on they go;
Bent with burdens, and years, and pain,
They struggle past in a motley train.

The jackals wail in a distant tope,
Wail and wail like a soul's lost hope.
And I close my eyes to the ceaseless hum
Of the grinding rice and a native drum.

—From the London *Spectator.*

HOW TO BECOME A WRITER

By CONINGSBY DAWSON.

STICK at it; that's the first rule. Stick at it intelligently; that's the second. Stick at it, believing in your own worth no matter how other people may discourage you; that's the third. And I might add a fourth, don't get hungry for money; any one can get money. If the getting of money is your sole aim you'll get death.

Becoming a writer is like becoming an architect, a lawyer, a doctor; like joining any one of the skilled professions. It takes years of work to accomplish proficiency, let alone perfection. You'd think a man a fool if, coming straight out from college and seeing the Metropolitan tower he said: "Ha, I'll be an architect. I'll build a tower in Chicago exactly like that." You'd know at once that he couldn't. He'd have to spend fourteen years in learning how. But any young person who has read Thackeray, possesses an admiring family and has access to paper and pen, thinks that to be a successful writer all the equipment necessary is the desire. Make no mistake about it, desire's only the egg from which the bird may ultimately be hatched.

Mothers have often said to me: "I wish you'd give Jessie a little encouragement. I'm sure she could write. She covers reams of paper when the mood's on her." Yes, and probably she never corrects. Tell me that she wastes hours in searching for the one right word and I'll believe there's hope for her. When Jacob was dying he prophesied of Reuben: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." It's the instability of most would be writers that bars them from excellence. At times they have the fatal fluency of water and can tear off pages and pages of unconsidered words, but they haven't the divine perseverance to stick at it till they've clothed their ideas with their highest possible best.

A man can only speak out of his own experience. I published books, innumerable articles and short stories before I had the first glimmerings of success. At 20 I was partly supporting myself by journalism; my first printed appearance was at the age of 14. My first volume was one of poetry, issued by the Macmillan Company. I was advised to try a novel, because my poems were supposed to have the dramatic quality. When written it was refused by the publisher who had urged me to write it, and appeared in England, only to sell something short of a thousand copies. Four years went by in trying and I had earned nothing. For my typewriting I was deeply in debt.

I thank my lucky stars that I wasn't fool enough to blame either public or publishers. The work as sheer writing was good, I knew that; but the construction was faulty. I was like a painter with an eye for color but poor draughtsmanship. What did I do? I devoted a year to studying and contrasting all the technical methods by which the great novelists had obtained their effects. I traced the novel's development from Greek times to the present, and came to the conclusion that no one had beaten Defoe in the main essentials. I took him as my model and built over him myself. But before I started building I knew that there was more to learn. I'd come across a curious fact, that most conspicuous novelists had been, some time or other, publishers' readers. I therefore came to New York and in telling other people what not to write in my official capacity suddenly jumped into a knowledge of what to write myself.

The first draft of "The Garden Without Walls" took a year and a quarter. It was written during evenings between 8 and 12 after a full day's office work. Sometimes I was so tired that I could only keep myself from slacking by making a bargain to produce 6,000 words a week without fail, like an employer paying money into a bank to meet obligations already incurred. My pride prevented me from going back on myself. This meant that for almost every evening during those fifteen months I drove myself up to my study, cancelling all pleasure engagements. And then when it was accepted by William Heinemann in London I saw a way of making it better, took it back and expended over nine months more work. Rather different from the ordinary idea of a gentleman with his feet up, racing across a page, smiling at his own conceits as he waggles his pen.

Of course there's the danger of discouragement. The embittered writer, even though he attains success, ought to break his pen, for he owes it as a duty to society to be happy. He can shape lives as God shapes bodies. His privilege and responsibility is to tilt men's chins up so that they see the stars overhead.

And there's no reason why any writer who is a writer should be discouraged. Somewhere at the back of his head the man who was born to spill ink knows that his day is coming. No one can hasten it but himself—by work.

PUTTING THE "CON" IN CONSERVATION

The first magazine article on conservation ever printed was written by William Atherton DuPuy of Washington, author of "Uncle Sam, Wonder Worker." It treated of the possible control of the flow of the Ohio River, and the scientific data for it were furnished by M. O. Leighton, waterflow expert of the Government.

Recently Mr. DuPuy met Mr. Leighton and they spoke of their pioneer work on the policy that has since grown so popular.

"We are the guys," insisted Mr. DuPuy, "who put the con in conservation."

"Yes," said Leighton, "and they have been putting it in ever since."

THREE THOUSAND LEGS ADVERTISED FOR

A little book, "The Human Slaughter House," by Wilhelm Lamszus, which pictured modern war in its stark reality, was issued this year by Stokes and created a profound impression. How far it was removed from exaggeration is brought home by this advertisement which recently appeared in the German papers:

> "Three thousand artificial legs are wanted by the Government of a nation at present in war. Estimates considered only from concerns who are able to deliver this quantity. Address Dr. Richard Mauch, Cologne."

AUTHOR WITH VARIED EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE

Edward Cave, the author of "The Boy Scout's Hike Book," recently published by Doubleday, Page and Company, has had a varied editorial experience. After some experience in Burlington, Ia., Cleveland and Chicago he came to New York in 1899. Since then he has been editor of the *Sporting Goods Dealer* and the *Dealer and Repairman* and assistant editor of the *Automobile* and of *Sports Afield*. He has twice been editor of *Recreation* and twice associate editor and is now associate editor of *Outdoor World and Recreation*, of which Caspar Whitney is editor. He has twice been editor of *Field and Stream* and once associate editor under Emerson Hough as editor. Recently he has been editor of *Boys' Life*, the official publication of the Boy Scouts of America. He is a scout master and active in the movement.

Mr. Cave was a pioneer in the agitation that led to the awakening of national interest in game protection. Two years ago he made a 4,000 mile automobile camping trip through twelve middle Western States with his wife and daughter, speaking in favor of a national federation for fish and game protection. His reports on the danger of a fish and game famine in the middle West resulted in the organizing of the American Game Protective and Propagation Association in September, 1911, and he greatly aided that association in securing the passage of the Weeks-McLean bill (March, 1913) which provides for Federal protection of all migratory birds.

Mr. Cave also started the Anglers Club of New York, the leading club of gentlemen anglers in this country, now over six years old. Recently Mr. Cave's articles in *Country Life in America* have attracted a good deal of attention among sportsmen. Mr. Cave advocates a new and fascinating game, clay bird golf, which is an ingenious combination of trap shooting and golf.

The "Boy Scout's Hike Book," which is to be followed by the "Boy Scout's Camp Book," is the first of a series of handy little pocket manuals of outdoor inspiration. Mr. Cave has led an outdoor life all his days and knows woodcraft. He has interesting views on the strenuous life of an editor. "I have found that working hard yourself will get other people to work hard for you," he says. "If my contributors find out that I am working nights and Sundays as well in the work of the magazine they will turn in and give me better work."

DIVERSIFIED EXPERIENCES OF CYNTHIA STOCKLEY

Cynthia Stockley, whose novels, "Poppy," "The Claw," "Wanderfoot," are published by the Putnams, is a South African by birth, but of Irish parentage. She lived all her early life in the Free State, spoke the Boer Taal and several native languages. During the Boer war she had a husband and brother fighting for the English and two half-brothers on the side of the Boers. She herself, in spite of being Irish, was for the English, for, though she had many friends among the Dutch, a thorough knowledge of the Boer character had taught her that South Africa would never come into its own under their retrogressive methods of government.

Cynthia Stockley's home is in Paris. She has an apartment in the Latin Quarter with a studio attached. It is in the studio that she works—a big, bright room with books and pictures and old oak furniture against the walls. Running down the centre of the room is an enormous oak table, black with age and beautifully carved, that was once used in the refectory of a Breton monastery. Round it are some quaint oak seats which came from England and are called "coffin stools," because in the sixteenth century every old fashioned house had a pair of them to rest the coffin of the dead upon.

One end of Mrs. Stockley's table is always littered with papers, typewriter, &c., but the other end is kept clear for impromptu meals, which are not only shared but often prepared by other artists and writers living in the same building or the same street. Rue Boissonade is indeed a famous street for artists and writers, both English and American. Richard Miller, the American, whose pictures in the Luxembourg Gallery are so well known, has a studio there. Constant Lounsberry, the poetess and playwright, lives on the same side of the street; Leslie Rosenthal, the artist, and Beatrice Irwin, the authoress of "The Pagan Trinity," likewise live in the street. Round the corner in the next street is Marie van Saanen, and the authoress of "Marie Claire." The Chicago artist Harry Solomon lived in the studio which Mrs. Stockley now occupies. The street is an impasse, with an old Jesuit monastery and gardens at the end of it. Right in the middle of the road is a tree that was planted by Victor Hugo.

ROYAL SPAIN OF TO-DAY

By TRYPHOSA BATES BATCHELLER

Author of "Italian Castles and Country Seats"

This is an account of a motor journey through Spain recently taken by Mr. and Mrs. Batcheller, who were accompanied by H. R. H. the Infanta Eulalia. Some time was spent in Madrid, and by the special favor of King Alfonso many opportunities to meet distinguished people and to see places and things of unusual interest were afforded; the accounts of such visits have been supplemented by appropriate historic data, and an attempt has been made to present a general picture of the country as it is to-day. There is also an account of a short trip to Portugal, during which the author was received and entertained by King Manuel and Queen Amelie.

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ACTRESS AS CRITIC OF STAGE NOVEL

AFTER the matinee *Peg o' My Heart* had just sat down in front of the mirror to take the first hairpin from her red wig, and *Michael* had just begun to gnaw his well earned dog biscuit under the table when both were interrupted by the interviewer. *Peg* turned around and became at once Miss Laurette Taylor, ready to tell what she thought of a new novel of the stage—"Anne, Actress," by a retired member of the profession, Miss Juliet G. Sager.

"Yes," said Miss Taylor, "'Anne, Actress,' is almost the only novel of the stage I ever read which pictures it truly, and it is a wonderful story. I sat up late to finish. Isn't it very popular? It ought to be. There have been a lot of libellous stories of the stage recently, which just exaggerate the dark side of it for the sake of making a sensation with the public. But every person on the stage knows that the majority of successful actresses are praiseworthy women, who have worked just as legitimately for their success as women in any other profession. The actress has a hard enough time anyway combatting the old prejudice against the stage without having to stem this new tide of misrepresentation. I liked 'Anne, Actress,' because it shows the real struggle, the hard work, the plucky disregard of disappointments; in fact the life and problems of a lovable woman who tries to make a success on the stage and works her way up. If anybody wants to find out what it's really like to be an actress he or she couldn't do better than read this story."

Miss Taylor has nothing of the taciturn in her.

"I remember the last book they sent me," said Miss Taylor. "It was scandalous and stupid at the same time. They tried to get me to say something striking against it when they found I didn't like it, but I wouldn't give them that chance for advertising. It was a dull book, and I insisted that if they quoted me at all they must use the word 'dull.' The man they sent tried to get me to leave that out, and when I wouldn't he said I must have consulted a lawyer."

By this time Hartley Manners dropped in, Miss Taylor's husband and the author of "Peg." She began to tell him what a good play "Anne, Actress," would make. "The situations are tremendous," she said, "and some of them are very humorous, too. Take that scene where Anne, who has been playing 'Camille,' has to convince the inexperienced playwright that she can play an ingenue role and makes him underestimate her age by at least ten years. No audience could miss the fun of that. And the public always wants the mother idea presented on the stage, too. This does it in an absolutely new way. If I didn't know where my next three plays were coming from"—here she smiled at Mr. Manners—"I should try it myself." Then she began to enumerate the actresses who ought to do it.

"Do you know of any actual cases like the book?" Miss Taylor was asked, "where the presence in the same cast of two people who looked too much alike spoiled the effect of the play?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "that's the reason the villains usually wear mustaches. Country audiences have sometimes thought the first good looking man they saw was the hero and got frightfully mixed up. As a consequence the mustache was adopted as a sort of sign manual of evil intentions."

"And how about the end of the book? Do you think it natural that the mother instinct should have been stronger than desire for success on the stage?"

"Yes," said Miss Taylor, "that was natural. That was right. You might have to change the ending in a play, but I don't think so. Of course, I hated the daughter who was such a cat as deliberately to get in her mother's way. Just before the first night, when Anne is to get her chance, I got fearfully excited about the daughter's actions and wondered why her mother didn't tie her up to the bedpost. But on the stage you could make the daughter more appealing and show that it was just the selfishness of youth that she had. And, by the way, Miss Sager made one interesting point there. The woman who had been fighting her own way in the world proved to be much more unselfish and human than the one who had been carefully nurtured at home."

Books Received.

"Clio, a Muse, and Other Essays." George Macaulay Trevelyan. (Longmans, Green and Company.)

"My Art and My Friends." Sir Frederic H. Cowen. (Edward Arnold; Longmans, Green and Company.)

"The Ten Christian Pasterals of Vergil." Vincent A. Fitz Simon, M. D. (J. J. Little and Ives Company, New York.)

"Popular Government." William Howard Taft. (Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.)

"Sexology of the Bible." Sidney C. Tapp. (The Burton Publishing Company, Kansas City, Mo.)

"Marriage as the Supreme School of Life." James Jardine Smith. (Modern Interpretation Press, Medford, Mass.)

"The Spiritual Message of Literature." Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, Ph. D. (Comparative Literature Press, Brooklyn, N. Y.)

"The Near East." W. Y. Morgan. (Crane and Company, Topeka, Kan.)

"History of the French Revolution." F. A. M. Mignet. (G. Bell and Sons; Macmillans.)

"Forty-three Drawings by Alastair." John Lane Company.)

"Knave of Hearts." Arthur Symons. (John Lane Company.)

"The Lonely Dancer and Other Poems." Richard Le Gallienne. (John Lane Company.)

"Arthur Sonzee." Robin Ernest Dunbar. (The author, South Bend, Ind.)

"The Teacher and Our Age." Charles A. Prosser. (Houghton Mifflin Company.)

Arkansan, 67, Weds Girl of 15.

FORT SMITH, Ark., Dec. 18.—Henry Medlock, 67 years old, a wealthy farmer, and Lydia Baldwin, 15, were married near Ozark to-day. The girl's mother consented and was present at the wedding.

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