

NEW BOOKS SEEN THROUGH REVIEWS AND COMMENT

CRITICAL REVIEWS OF THE SEASON'S LATEST BOOKS

Good and Stirring Tale of a Reformer Who Fell—The Story of a Superfluous Husband. An Anonymous Hoosier Tale—New Fiction by Meredith Nicholson, Lincoln Colcord and Others.

The quiet nature of the opening part of Justus Miles Forman's story of "The Blind Spot" (Harper and Brothers) hardly suggests the sharp action that is to come later; all the better that there should be a surprise. It is made plain that the house in Westchester county was a fine place, such a home as the rich may have in the country to supplement the grand but hardly expansive and unjustly city domicile. That Linda Grey, sole daughter of this Westchester house—and of another in Sixty-sixth street near the Park—was lovely in person and sprightly and engaging in speech we were not permitted to doubt, but remembering what we had found in other novels we shied somewhat at Arthur Stone, who was a reformer.

We might have spared ourselves the fear that this was going to be a too earnest and uplifting story. Arthur Stone's conversation with gentle and lovely Alice Farnborough was queer; persons meeting for the first time do not usually discuss so freely and so thoroughly other persons with whom they are about to sit down to dinner. It was, however, an interesting and a cheerful dinner that is here recorded. Linda's genial father was over, and so was Linda, and the general pleasant effect was not spoiled by Arthur's oration on common sense and the silliness of war.

Was Linda's friend Copley Latimer, for whom she felt a tenderness, more free with the spirit bottle at this dinner than she should have been? We find the pair considering the point on the moonlit terrace. It was a round moon, and it shed a pallid mist on the night. Besides the major orb a million stars crowded the mid-September sky. Linda gazed at the terrace balustrade. "You've been a long time, Copley," she said as the young man came out through one of the long windows. "Did Steven tell you funny stories?" Steven was Copley's neighbor at dinner; he told excellent stories. The description goes on very frankly. "He did," said Mr. Latimer. "I'm full of fiction and Irish whiskey. And there seemed to be some truth in it. I should have been as good as dead a little while ago. I had a rich odor of spirits. Miss Grey didn't especially mind that, for she was accustomed to people who drank either champagne or whiskey with their dinners, but she disliked the way Mr. Latimer expressed himself. There seemed to her to be an unbecoming touch of flippancy in the man, and she thought that he was a little rather deeply alone. She turned to him with an impatient frown. "Oh, don't daunt it, Copley! I should have known without your boasting! That stung him a little." He proved to her that he could say "British constitution" as it is pronounced by the sober, and it is soon shown that Copley, far from being a lost young man, was a very brave and worthy one.

The description of the "badger game" and of Copley's rescue by Arthur Stone from what might have been his very scandalous consequences makes a stirring and exciting part of the tale, and no less stirring is the part that tells of the flinching of the reformer and the brave readiness of Copley when the sailing began fell in front of the runaway moving and storing van. Arthur Stone was shaken on the pedestal of fame on this occasion, and he was toppled from it when he made his atheistic speech in Cooper Union. The story of Mrs. Halverson, the "bedroom" wife, is strange. It is strange that the Greys should have invited her to dinner; strange too that she should have been at the same time a socialite and a good Catholic, refusing to get herself a divorce. Nevertheless Mrs. Halverson is distinctly interesting, and so is all the book.

A GENIAL DIVORCED MAN.

The situation that Edward C. Venable meditates over in "Pierre Vinton" (Charles Scribner's Sons) can hardly be unamusing and it is surprising that writers of fiction have not made use of it. It is the story of a gentleman who loves his wife, but has parted with her according to her wish. They married for love, but in time she grew restless and tired of him; they first separated and then were divorced, with no stigma on either. His name is Peter, the author having accepted for convenience that accepted convention and gave for a kindly, harmless philosopher; it saves time, at any rate, and enables him to get to the point at once.



JEAN WEBSTER, AUTHOR OF "THE CLEAN HEART"



J. D. BENSFORD, AUTHOR OF "THE VANISHED MESSENGER"

ness about her procedure, but man after man succumbs to it till the author gets tired of repeating it and ends the little book. The scene is laid in Honolulu and its environs, but the scenery is merely used to set off the young woman's performances. There is a cumulative effect in reading of these all together, but we fancy more enjoyment will be derived by taking the episodes separately.

AN IDYL OF INDIANA.

Whoever the anonymous author of "In My Youth" (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis) may be, he or she has rendered a service to Indiana and the whole Middle West in drawing a faithful picture of the life in the pioneer days and of the men who have made the nation. The narrator professes to be an old man telling the story of his boyhood to the grandchildren he might have had. He is an imaginative little fellow born in a log cabin on the edge of the forest in a little Quaker settlement. He talks about the place, the people around him, first his family and then the neighbors, the things that happened day by day, with no formal descriptions, but as they would tell of them to another. The surroundings and the life are those in substance that Abraham Lincoln grew up in a few years earlier. Little by little the knowledge of new things come to the child and the old man compares them with his later experiences.

SOME NEW FICTION.

A loving tribute to another star in the Indiana galaxy to another will be found in Meredith Nicholson's "The Poet" (Houghton Mifflin Company). Though never named in the story, for that is needless, as he must be recognized at the first glance, any doubt is removed by the inscription, "The Poet: All the People Love," and by the portrait, both on the cover. With graceful and tender humor Mr. Nicholson makes him act as a matchmaker, bringing together artfully a charming young girl and a promising newspaper reporter, who also writes verse. The poet furthermore starts to write to break down the barriers between a husband and wife who have become estranged and are on the verge of divorce. He leads them all to see that faithfulness to art is better than worldly success. It is a very pretty story in itself and it shows consummate art in the author to picture James Whitcomb Riley as his admirer and to see him in this pasty in prose.

LITERARY PERSONALITIES

FRANK L. PACKARD.

Frank L. Packard, whose novel "The Miracle Man" has just met a second round of success in the form dramatized and staged by George M. Cohan, made his first reputation as a writer of thrilling railroad stories because he is a trained civil engineer. He studied not only at McGill University in Canada but also at L'Institut Montefiore in Belgium. During his technical school vacations he worked in civil and mechanical shops in the Pacific coast. It is one of those jobs of which a pleasant elderly gentleman invariably says to a much pleased younger one that invaluable experience is much pay.

CLARA E. LAUGHLIN.

Clara E. Laughlin returned the other day from Europe, after having been in France all during the offensive invasion. Having spent part of the summer in New Zealand, she came back to the interior in New Zealand, then back to Auckland, from which point she sailed to the South Sea Islands, the "romantic opera kingdom of Tonga," and then to Samoa and Fiji, and later to Hawaii.

ELEANOR HALLOWELL ABBOTT.

Eleanor Hallowell Abbott is in private life Mrs. F. R. Cobbett, the wife of a physician in Lowell, Mass. Born in Cambridge, Mass., the daughter of Edward Abbott, minister and writer, the niece of William Abbott, minister and writer, she was naturally all toward literary ends. Not only in her immediate family was the literary influence prominent, but also in her Cambridge environment. One of her nearest neighbors was the poet Lowell, and as a little girl she used to walk hand in hand with that kindly man along the gravel paths of his gorgeous garden, and talk with him of roses, fairies, paper dolls, of whatever happened to be uppermost in his mind at that time.

MARIE VAN VORST.

Marie Van Vorst, the novelist whose new book "Big Tremaine" (Little, Brown & Company) sold three editions before publication, is with the Red Cross service in England. She is a member of the staff of nurses of the Bedford College detachment. Her own story of how she and her mother escaped from Paris at the

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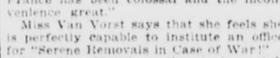
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