

BOOKS OF THE WEEK SEEN IN REVIEW AND COMMENT

CRITICAL REVIEWS OF THE SEASON'S LATEST BOOKS

Biography of Heinrich Conried Pictures Interesting Stage of the Theatre in New York. Brilliant New Piece of Work by Algernon Blackwood - Rollicking Tale of a Dead Irish Town.

HEINRICH CONRIED. (Thomas Y. Crowell Company.) By Montrose J. Moses. (\$2.50.) The part Heinrich Conried took in the development of the theatre in New York and his remarkable personality give interest to even so inadequate a biography as Montrose J. Moses has compiled. (Thomas Y. Crowell Company.) The author apparently knew little of Conried except in his later years; he has been content to throw together second hand evidence instead of consulting the many persons familiar with Conried's career who may be still consulted by an earnest biographer. For Conried would not be only a life lived, and he offers rather commonplace eulogy with gossip. Still he presents a picture of the man's achievement that intelligent readers will appreciate.

Conried was the son of a Jewish weaver named Cohn in a small town in Poland, and was trained in his father's trade. He was struck, left his home, and in spite of his appearance by his pertinacity made his way into respectable companies. In his early twenties he secured an engagement under Foerster at the Leipzig Theatre, where he formed the acquaintance of an American student, who is now Prof. Carpenter of Columbia, the fittest person perhaps to write a real biography. In his brief German theatrical career he showed his ca-

pacuity as a stage manager and a director; this led Adolf Neussendorf to engage him to come to the United States. His biographer has much to say of his vanity, his mannerisms and his imperiousness, but the people who chafed under his strictness recognized his ability. He was impatient of authority and passed through some years of trouble till he became master in his own theatre. In those years he was apparently as much concerned with business as with the stage, and it was as a play broker that he obtained his first solid footing. The business drew him into relations with Rudolf Aronson of the American stage, and he was between them that he succeeded in making light musical plays of German origin popular in New York. Then Conried was able to take up the enterprise that he had really at heart, the raising of the German theatre in New York to the standard of the best theatres in Germany, and he proved in the opinion of his friends, he should be judged. He was enough of a man of business to make concessions to popular taste, remembering the repeated failures of his predecessors, but he was an idealist, he admired German literature, he knew the theatrical portion of it thoroughly, and he saw to it that his German audiences should become acquainted with the classics and the plays that stood for something as well as the ephemeral stuff they liked. He was a fine actor himself, as he proved when he chose to appear; he saw to it that his company did him credit, and he gave New York the opportunity to see the celebrities of the day on the German stage in the stars he engaged. Mr. Moses rather pessimistically thinks that the audience he gathered together can no longer be attracted because the new German generation does not care for its language or its theatre. In that he is pretty surely mistaken, even if the war feeling is left out of consideration. It was as director of the Irving Place Theatre that Conried was induced by Prof. Carpenter to engage in the propaganda for German culture, of which every one approved heartily till the war broke out, by lecturing before the universities on the German stage and letting them see the classic plays performed by his company.

Of Conried's work as manager of the Metropolitan Opera House Mr. Moses has much more to say, as he has closer knowledge of it. This we shall not touch upon, though it was the most brilliant period of Conried's life, his apotheosis as a manager. The account of the "Parisian" production is particularly entertaining. It is Conried the artist, however, the man who fought to establish his ideal of his national theatre, that will be remembered. That ideal he held to in the advice he gave to the students who have been striving to establish a national theatre for the English drama such as the Germans, French and Italians possess. The book is illustrated with photographs.

JULIUS LEVALLON. (E. P. Dutton & Co.) By Algernon Blackwood. (\$1.50.) As pure and brilliant English prose as has appeared in this twentieth century will be found in the first half of Algernon Blackwood's Julius Le Vallon (E. P. Dutton & Co.), in which he expounds with marvellous clearness and precision the mystical and philosophi-

cal ideas which should make his story comprehensible. His reasoning is flawless, so that its being worked out in schoolboy style will be accepted, and it is helped out with exquisite scenes from some far away land, from Kent and from Edinburgh. The narrator, somewhat reluctantly, and his hero believe that the soul is eternal, that nothing in the universe, whether matter or spirit, can perish, and both have visions of their existence in a life long past. In that life the two and a woman did something wrong and that wrong must be set right. Though the hero does try to reanimate a lifeless body, the processes seem purely mental in both worlds. After many years of separation the two come together again in the author's favorite Jura Mountains full of the atmosphere of expectation and terror which he creates so skillfully. The hero has married a girl in whom dwells the soul of their prehistoric woman companion. He has stooped to coarser methods like hypnotism to bring her subconsciousness into life. The three prepare for a further experiment in reincarnation which involves some astrological notions. Mr. Blackwood keeps up the feeling of terror until the climax, but he confesses to having very little idea of what the original crime was, except that it was selfish, and still less idea of what the intended expiation was to be, except that it involved self-sacrifice in the form of



OWEN JOHNSON, AUTHOR OF 'THE WOMAN GIVES' (LITTLE BROWN)

relation to the hero, a middle aged bachelor, who is manager of the local bank. He is a shrewd, genial Irishman, with a taste for literature and an inclination to lecture on marriage. With the aid of the town blacksmith, who is humorous and unscrupulous as himself, he plays the townspeople against one another, makes them subscribe the money, puts through the desired improvements and wins the girl. Realism is carried so far as to prove the dizziness and stupidity of a few citizens by their own speeches, but apart from that we proceed from one natural and ridiculous incident to another, accompanied by talk that is as funny as well as sensible and is full of flashes of wit. The hero's renderings of Horace are capital and the love-making is delicate and delightful. The reader will be glad to know the hero, the girl and the blacksmith, and will not forget them soon, he will like to know of other people also and some animals.

ENOCH CRANE. (Charles Scribner's Sons.) By F. Hopkinson Smith and F. Berkeley Smith. (\$1.35.)

Ellal plot has kept F. Berkeley Smith under restraint, so that if the late F. Hopkinson Smith wrote out only the first three chapters of Enoch Crane (Charles Scribner's Sons) his style and tone have been held to so closely in the rest of the story that only occasionally is another hand revealed. As the story opens in a house on Waverley place the reader knows that it is Bohemian New York that we have to do with. The central figure is an old lawyer, who lives on the top floor in comfortable artistic rooms and watches over the fortunes of the other inmates. He sallies into society whenever he chooses also. A couple of pleasant Southern dukes look for a house in the city, and the old lawyer, who is a kind of a young architect, there is a genial young architect and there is a pretty girl with a voice and her unpleasant family. She is burdened by a worthless stepfather, who is a swindling promoter, trying to extract money from her, and she is still the lawyer's mistress. He is pursued also by a married libertine who rapes the lawyer's violence in places where it is not allowed. It is clear that all the characters were created in the mind of the author, and the book even in its present shape is one that we should not have wished to miss, for it has much of the charm that the author always threw out New York. What the reader will extract from the novel is the place where the incidents occur, not the characters, but the old New York which has amplified, but which his son has wisely left alone. It is a graceful farewell from a lovable author.

LATE NEWS OF BOOKS AND OF BOOKMEN

Both Tarkington's novel "Seventeen" is now being adapted for the movies. According to the official figures of the Bookman "Seventeen" was far in the lead as the best selling book for the month of July.

Had William Sidney Porter (O. Henry) lived he would have celebrated his forty-fourth birthday. In the six years since his death his fame and the sale of his books have been increasing each year. His works are being translated into French, and one London bookseller reports that he has sold 500 copies of O. Henry in less than two months. In England the first O. Henry volume of a shilling appeared this year, and the publishers estimate that before the end of the year they will have sold 500,000 copies.

In this country to celebrate the O. Henry anniversary a complete biography will be issued. For three years O. Henry's story, professor of English at the University of Virginia, and husband of Sidney Porter's, has been gathering material for the bio-

graph which Doubleday, Page & Co. will bring out in October. Capt. Ian Hay (Beth (Ian Hay), the author of "The First Hundred Thousand," is under orders to rejoin the forces on the continent, which will insure the completion of "The First Hundred Thousand." The delay in publication, after the announcement of the book, was occasioned by Capt. Beth's being recalled to England to serve as instructor in machine gun practice at one of the training camps.

In a new edition of William Roscoe Thayer's "Life and Letters of John Hay," soon to be issued by Houghton Mifflin Company, there will be included an important contribution from Theodore Roosevelt, setting forth for the first time the inner negotiations in 1903 over the Venezuelan difficulty.

This story is told on Ring W. Lardner, author of the baseball stories, "You Know Me All." In company with some famous Yale athletes, Mr. Lardner was on his way from New Haven to New York, deep in a game of pool, when the New Haven pulled off one of its characteristic tricks. Amidst hissing steam, shattered glass and cries of passengers, the athletes made out the nearest windows. When after an hour of strenuous work with the injured, the group reassembled, the writer of "You Know Me All" was missing. They went back to the Pullman, Homeier, the famous Yale end, muttering over and over: "Where the devil can he be? Where the devil can he be?" Then a voice suddenly answered from inside the Pullman: "Here I am, but I can't find that damned jack of diamonds!"



GEORGE BARR MCCUTCHEON, AUTHOR OF 'FROM THE HOUSTOPS' (DODD MEAD)

Like Haroun al Raschid of old, Mr. McCutcheon has been wandering through New York—that modern Bagdad of splendor, fashion and wealth, and above all, New Ideas. And "From the Housetops" is what he saw; a drama of love, wealth, ambition, envy, with strong youth and gilded youth, proud maidens and simply good ones, and then—The New Idea. Have you read about the French and British troopers, severely, perhaps fatally, wounded in battle, taking cocaine to "put them to sleep"? Have you heard of the possibility of relieving hopeless human suffering as we relieve such suffering in the lower animals? Has society the right to take the final step to alleviate such suffering? Such is the theme of this startling, vivid and entertaining story of Cosmopolitan New York.

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