

LATE NEWS FROM THE WRITING AND PUBLISHING WORLD

NEW FICTION OFFERINGS FROM POPULAR AUTHORS

Mrs. Wharton Reveals Her Skill Anew—Mr. Bennett Presents An Independent Heroine. New Novels by E. Nesbit, Will Levington Comort, Brewster Corcoran and E. V. Lucas.

XINGU. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

By Edith Wharton. (\$1.40.) The eight short stories that make up Edith Wharton's Xingu (Charles Scribner's Sons) serve to show not only her mastery of English style but also the sureness of touch she has attained in several forms of literary art.

The common dialect of every day life which she has employed in some of her long novels alone is lacking and will hardly be missed. She still prefers, in common with the few other women writers whose English sets them apart from the common run of purveyors of fiction, themes that are needlessly distasteful or morbid, which is to be regretted. In the title story she reverts brilliantly to the kind of work that marked her first appearance in print, the sparkling satire of feminine foibles amusingly set in its cloak of farce, the only story in the collection that can evoke a light hearted laugh. It is followed by a hideous tale of the present war, the horrors indicated indirectly with consummate art and all the more revolting on that account. The two most stories are, in fact, the analyzed psychology of the cases in which men and women discuss whether they shall break through the convention of marriage or not, and of the satire on the change in the attitude of society toward divorce. The actors in these have diverse themselves of human feelings in their passion for casuistry, collecting the requirements of this form of fiction. Mrs. Wharton, however, does present possible cases for this analysis and is not satisfied with mere splitting of hairs. The last and longest story in the book is a grim piece of realistic pessimism. The author gives a bit of shabby old New York with the minute accuracy of the Dutch painter; she shows the two elderly women attending to their little shop, the little sacrifice the older sister makes, her simple romance, and then the crumbling of her little world. It ends with a pitiful prospect of continued misery, which may be artistic and may be true to life, but will strike many readers as being sheer brutality.

THE LION'S SHARE. (George H. Doran Company.)

By Arnold Bennett. (\$1.50.) In spite of the author's rather eccentric ideas of what is funny, which may cause the reader at the beginning of Arnold Bennett's The Lion's Share (George H. Doran Company), Americans will sympathize more than Mr. Bennett seems to with his heroine's desires. She is young and healthy, gifted with a degree of Scottish causticity and a wish to get as much enjoyment as she can out of life. The author deprives her summarily of her parents and home control; she has an estate and all the money she needs; she frees herself from supervision by pretending to be a widow and then ventures out into the world. She goes to Paris, where she meets other independent women, English and American, who dabble in art and are interested in the suffrage movement. The heroine tries bohemian life for a while and then the ways of the fashionable boulevard and enjoys both, enabling Mr. Bennett to exhibit his familiarity with Paris and the French. Next she engages in the English suffrage campaign, and Mr. Bennett has his fun with that movement. She has taken in tow early a helpless young violinist who seems to have little attraction beyond temperament, and she decides to launch him on the public, which is the occasion for sarcastic information about the ways of managers, British and French. Finally, after considering another man, she decides to marry her violinist. The ease with which the girl keeps out of the way of her own companions get into it is entertaining and her

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aspirations are laudable. There are many episodes that are funny in the story, more where the fun is interesting, but more are conventional types of fiction pushed into the story for no ostensible reason. It is pretty clumsy work for Mr. Bennett to turn out at this stage in his career.

THE INCREDIBLE HONEYMOON.

(Harpers.) By E. Nesbit. (\$1.50.) The venture into the popular open road form of fiction made by E. Nesbit in The Incredible Honeymoon (Harpers) opens very promisingly for the hero and heroine meet with the proper disregard of convention in which poetry and farce are blended in a most amusing way. For a time they are really adventurous and even when they settle down to the author's rather humdrum standards of enjoyment the development of their love for one another will keep the reader pleasantly occupied to the end. The young man has all the money he wants and apparently the girl has all the money of her own, for he is able to gratify his pronounced Santa Claus inclinations at any moment with any sum required. He is able to buy motors and pay railway fares, which is fortunate for the story, as it leads the author, after the usual amount of through the form of marriage, to take them sightseeing to picturesque places which she wishes to describe and on a motor trip through the Cinque Ports country. The adventures then become the ordinary mishaps of travel and the story catches into another popular form of literature, the tale of a motor trip with comments on the places visited. Accordingly the last half

THE BEST STORIES

By E. V. LUCAS. I was reading the other day that most amusing of clerks in holy orders who writes Irish farcical stories over the pseudonym "G. A. Birmingham," but is known to the angels as Canon Hannay, has given it as his opinion that the best funny thing ever said is Charles Lamb's reply to the doctor who recommended him to take a walk on an empty stomach. "When I have an empty stomach," he said, "I go to the church and pray for the souls of the departed and also a canon, the Rev. Sydney Smith, and it is to be found in every collection of his most sayings. Canon Hannay, who is normally so exacting in his church even more than her due—of her she do not create out of 'J. J.' the curate, a supermagazine, then, blending the wit of Lamb, the wit of Sydney Smith and the wit of the Rev. Sydney Smith in one?—Canon Hannay, one would think, would have naturally allotted Sydney Smith everything. More than the joke in Sydney Smith's wit than in Lamb's; not because Lamb was not expert at that peculiar variety of nonsense, but because Lamb had a passion for the living and rarely should say, suffered from any malady needing this particular remedy. "The witty canon was a diner out, addicted to good eating and drinking, and a walk on an empty stomach would probably have done him a world of good. And now I lay aside my pen for a few moments in order to wonder what my new witty story is, and have the usual difficulty in remembering any stories at all. Searching my memory, I find that Lamb comes up first, which is not unusual, for in the stories which most appeal to me, it is the wit of Lamb that I rather than Malles, Malles is easier, for one thing, and the laughter it causes is of inferior quality. That touch of gay nonsense which Lamb had and Sydney Smith had is worth (to me) all the brilliant bitterness. This time, too, it is authentic Lamb, and not Brummagem. My next witty story is Lamb's reply to the reproach of his India House superior, "You always come late to the office." "Yes, but see how early I leave!" That could not easily be beaten.

Lamb, however, did not consider that his best thing. We have it in a story that he thought his not too kindly remark to his friend Hume on the size of Hume's family his best joke; but I, for one, do not think it his best. Hume, Hume, was the father of a numerous brood, and he happened once to be so ill advised as to mention his paternal achievement, apparently with pride, in Lamb's presence. "One fool," quoted Lamb, "makes many." Personally, I don't much esteem this story, not only because it is a score on a simple conceit, and a score on a simple conceit, but also because it comes into the category of those sayings which the joker must himself have reported, or which the recipient of the wit could not well report except resentfully. We can imagine the auditor of the priceless reply, "But see how early I leave," after recovering from the stunned condition into which its tremendous irrelevance and foolishness knocked him, hurrying away in perplexity to report it in all its incredulity to fellow officials. "What on earth do you think that that mad creature Lamb has just said to me?" and so on. But one does not see Hume hastening round to spread that family joke, Lamb, or another, must himself have done it.

Similarly, when the Austrian Journalist Saphir, who said so many witty things, met an enemy in a narrow passage, he said to the enemy, "I have not made way to let a fool pass," pressed himself against the wall, saying, "I will," it must have been Saphir who said the glad thing, "I have not made way to let a fool pass," said a man, said Lamb (and proved it, too), may laugh at his own joke; but I think we always rather prefer that it should first get into currency by the other fellow's agency. And yet, if that rule were strictly followed we should lose too many good things, for your true humorist scatters his jewels indiscriminately and does not reserve them for the fitting ear. Sir Walter Raleigh (I mean not the explorer but the longest knight) has pointed out that the reason why we have comparatively so few records of Lamb's jokes is that he made them to simple people, who either did not understand him good, they were not in the way of quoting them. As a friend of mine, who does something in the wagon line himself, remarked early to me



EDITH WHARTON AUTHOR OF "XINGU" (SCRIBNER'S)



ARNOLD BENNETT AUTHOR OF "THE LION'S SHARE" (DORAN)



WILL LEVINGTON COMORT AUTHOR OF "THE LAST DITCH" (DORAN)

the story hangs fire a good deal while the guide explains, but the two young people are lovable and interesting. They are accompanied by a comic bulldog who is a good deal of a nuisance.

THE LAST DITCH. (George H. Doran Company.)

By Will Levington Comort. (\$1.35.) The prologue of Will Levington Comort's The Last Ditch (George H. Doran Company) inspires hope. A young American who is trying to understand China meets an English woman who is wandering around the world in search of the man fit to be the father of the hero's child. She wishes to have. She explains her interesting theory very plainly, and he hopes he may be the man, but she finds him immature, and moreover in telling about himself he describes what another man has done, thereby losing any chance he might have had with her. The description of the other man is made to fit exactly a real person who has figured in Chinese affairs; the use the author makes of him in his story seems inexcusable. The woman assures the young man that he is the man in time, the right woman to entertain the passion he imagines he

has for her and leads him whereupon he takes to drink. After months of degradation in the native quarter of a Chinese town, when he is rescued by a Chinese educated in America, who needs him to help regenerate China. Thereafter the story becomes one of adventure; the hero goes through many astonishing experiences in a short time; he has a thrilling adventure with a Japanese spy which brings into conflict Occidental and Oriental ethical standards, he discovers a delightful scheme for exterminating the Japanese by means of a pestilence and he is sent on a diplomatic errand across the Desert of Gold. There he meets a European girl and at once transfers his affection to her; he delays his mission to the interest of the story while engaged in this occupation, as he must conform to the principles enunciated in the prologue. He becomes tangled up in the theology of a sort of Yogi, who is all powerful in the desert, and entices him to fulfil his mission to the present at the extermination of the Chinese reformers before he is united to his beloved. It is an interesting tale, with many exciting episodes, though the hero suffers from the amelioration of the author's ideas.

THE ROAD TO LE REVE. (The Page Company, Boston.)

By Brewster Corcoran. (\$1.25.) Even masterful methods can hardly account for the deep impression made by a young engineer in Brewster Corcoran's The Road to Le Reve (The Page Company, Boston) on the mind of a financier's daughter when he explains his plan of running a railroad through the great game preserve owned by her father and his associates. When her fancy turns to him with the rapidity that the Maine shores and woods foster, the situation becomes clearer. The financiers are at Maine boys who in spite of their ruthless business methods have backed each other when in difficulty, and after the bank and acquired the right to buy back up the land in the district where they were born, spend their summers together and consort with the guides who were their old neighbors. An idyllic community surely, but it must be disturbed in order to help the country people. This the hero proceeds to do, and in the process he is in the face of violent and sometimes unfair opposition on the part of the magnates. We could wish for more description of life on the lakes and in the woods, more normal intercourse among young people and less of the social functions and business and industry of the city, but it is a pleasant and readable story.

ONNIE MORGAN IN ALASKA. (G. P. Putnam's Sons.)

By James B. Hendryx. (\$1.25.) An admirably well told story of personal adventures in the far north is Onnie Morgan in Alaska, by James B. Hendryx (G. P. Putnam's Sons). Though the hero is a boy this is no boys' book, for the chase with a dog team after his minor partner, their wanderings through the waste lands of the Yukon territory, their struggles with the white Eskimo of the Copernicus River, their privations in getting back to Alaska appeal to older lovers of adventure. The author extols the virtues of the Alaska pioneers, and those he brings into his story are all fine fellows. The illustrations and woodcuts or illustrations are commendable; those used in this book are far more attractive than the customary process pictures.

THE VERMILION BOX. (George H. Doran Company.)

By E. V. Lucas. (\$1.25.) By means of a batch of letters written by many members of a large family and by their friends, which for some unexplained reason he calls The Vermilion Box (George H. Doran Company), a genial humorist, E. V. Lucas, describes various typical English men and women in war times. The chief among them are a middle aged man about town, who collects the opinions of the people he meets and striking things that are said or printed, and one of the hands of the women and who tries to help and advise the others. The others represent types the war has brought out, the grumblers and critics, the busybodies, the shirkers, the women who sought notoriety as organizers and so on, and on the other hand, the spirit of the woman and youths who enlisted, the girls who served as nurses, the people who really tried to help. There is a pretty love story that ends happily, a shorter one that is tragic. The character of the people stands out vividly, but not even Mr. Lucas's humor can make the book other than sad.

Short Stories.

Ten pleasant short stories by Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews are collected under the title The Eternal Feminine (Harpers), the title being chosen probably because the chief actors in most of them are the women and not for any subtle analysis of woman's nature, which fortunately is not attempted. Some of the stories are humorous. They are all interesting and well up to the average of magazine

Fleming calls Half Lights (Longmans, Green & Co.), which are sketches of character viewed in nearly every case through pessimistic eyes. The cynical intent is obvious and usually detracts from the purpose of the story, as in most instances it is easy to see how different it would be when judged by a kinder or juster mind. It is clever work of a sort that is much too common in England.

BOOKS AND BOOKMEN

In "A Book About the Theatre" (Scriveners) Brander Matthews sets himself, as he lightly puts it, "to discuss the minor arts of the dancer and the acrobat, to chatter about the conjurer and the negro minstrel, to consider the principles of pantomime and the development of scene painting, etc.," as the result of "scurrying into the parlour of the playhouse," which began some decades ago in his boyhood. These chapter headings suggest the scope of the book. "The Show Business," "Why Five Acts," "Women Dramatists," "The Principles of Pantomime," "The Ideal of the Acrobat," "The Decline and Fall of Negro Minstrelsy," and "The Utility of the Variety Show."

The world's greatest living teacher of the dramatic art is what they term David Belasco—certainly he is America's most famous producer of plays. "The first word, and the last, in acting is temperament," he says in his foreword to "Training for the Stage," just published by Lippincott. "There must be heart, heart, heart. . . Intelligence is desirable, but it is secondary. The merely brainy actor is never a great actor on the stage. The heart is greater than the brain." Arthur Hornblow's book, in Mr. Belasco's opinion, "contains much of interest to the professional. It should also be of great value to the novice."

"This volume," says John Galsworthy in his preface to "A Sheaf," "is but a garnering of non-creative writings; mostly pieces of some sort or other—some of the same opinion as the anonymous gentleman who thus joyously addressed him last July: 'But there—I suppose you are getting a bit out of it. Men of your caliber will do anything for filthy lucre—you old and cunning reptile.' He mentions that he has not personally profited a penny by anything in this volume, and that the future proceeds therefrom will be given to St. Dunstan's and the National Institute for the Blind, London. "A Sheaf" is a collection of sketches and essays similar to "A Motley," "The Inn of Tranquillity," etc. It is published by the Scribners.

"A Diary of the Great War," by Saml. Peeps, Junr., Esq., M. A., is a collection of very short stories which Gay

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One of the minor effects of the war has been the postponement of new volumes in English of Baedeker's famous series of guide books, and this has led both English and American publishers to announce a series of guide books of local interest by local authors. Henry Holt & Co. announce Holt's "Guide of New York City," which is edited by Fremont Rider, editor of the Publisher's Weekly, and which treats of New York city on the same general plan as Baedeker does of London and Paris. But in addition to the features usually found in Baedeker this book devotes a good deal more attention to the industrial and manufac-

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