

# The Sun.

BOOKS AND THE BOOK WORLD  
GRANT M. OVERTON, Editor -

SUNDAY, JULY 21, 1918.

## "Tell Me What He Reads—"

WE have just destroyed a notice of four books dealing with the general subject of war and peace because, from the story about them prepared by our reporter, it is evident that they are propaganda of the disguised sort. Propaganda that shows its colors we don't object to; but when Professor PAXVOBISCUM writes a book hinting or "proving" the allies of America to be no better than the Imperial German Government and labels his book with a title implying a detached treatment of war in general we shall not knowingly take any notice of his effort. The Postmaster-General and the Department of Justice can do the "reviewing."

We notice that most of the books affecting to treat of war in general and peace in general treat of this war in particular and a particular peace. The particular peace is frequently one which would occasion great joy all the way from Berlin to—well, not quite to Bagdad. The professor is particular about the peace and we are particular too.

There are things more important than "literature." One of them is the United States of America.

By the way, where are the young men who used to be despised because, simple souls, they revelled in the stories of RICHARD HARDING DAVIS? In the army, or waiting the call. And where are the young men who used to read the distinguished literary work of COLLAPSEOVITCH, RUINSKY and GROSSHAUPTKAISERMANN? They are reading the works of COLLAPSEOVITCH, RUINSKY and GROSSHAUPTKAISERMANN.

## "Khaki," by Freeman Tilden.

BESIDES the Great War Novel that we all wonder if we shall be seeing one of these days there is the Great American War Novel, the thing that shall do for America what *Mr. Britling* did for England. We have to remember that it was not what *Mr. Britling* did for England in England, but what it did for England in America that counts chiefly in any estimate of Mr. WELLS's book. The Great American War Novel will be the novel which will do for America in England and possibly in France what *Mr. Britling* did for England here in America—make us, as a people, somewhat better understood.

Almost are you persuaded that *Khaki: How Tredick Got Into the War*, by FREEMAN TILDEN, is the American equivalent of *Mr. Britling*. You suspect that *Khaki* may do for us among our allies what some of their writings have done for them among us. Say what they please, *Khaki* is a wonderful story. You feel you would not like to be the American who could read it without a little ache back of a pair of moist eyes.

For Tredick is not a man but a town and Mr. TILDEN's story is not of one town but of a thousand. With all its faults, with its crudities, its baldness, its fervor, we have read nothing approaching it as a picture of America in the years 1915, 1916, 1917. The very faults, the crudities, are American; the preaching is our gospel, the truth as we have come to see it, the light as God gives us to see the light.

## An "Authentic" Story.

Mr. TILDEN has written a real story, the plausibility of which in some of its details simply doesn't matter; the vigor, the excitement, the thrill of which matter immensely. Tredick is a sleepy village nestled in the hills and run, so far as a perfunctory public administration exists, by Deacon BRADSHAW. For reasons of his own the Deacon that selected TOM GILSTAR, the town's gentlest young man, a giant in physique, to be the new constable. Every one knows that TOM is a—well, a coward. Might as well say it. TOM admits it himself.

TOM had a brother, SHERIDAN, who got into so much deviltry that the angered Deacon drove him out of the place years before the beginning of this story. SHERRY had been sweet on the Deacon's daughter—but the Deacon didn't know that. TOM's sweetheart is ANTONIA, the daughter of a French-Canadian. TOM lives with and looks after his mother. Besides the Deacon there is one other rich person and capable business man in the town. This is Miss PRUDENCE PERKINS, and she has more brains than the Deacon. "Both wholly honest, as

they construed honesty, and they construed it pretty justly; both unbending and unforgiving in the face of sharp practice or injustice; both unceasingly clever in scenting a bargain and driving it—they were different in this: that the woman was the abler of the two, and knew it, and it served to make her generous, where the Deacon was parsimonious. She had been known to forget a mortgage note; the Deacon never."

Professor GEORGE WATLING WENHAM, a large egg-shaped person, was principal of the Tredick High School and customarily made money in summer by escorting travellers about Europe. His party suffered a provoking train delay in 1914, but the Professor looked forward with some expectation to 1915, when he should be able to conduct his people on a tour of the principal Belgian battlefields. However, the war quite irrationally went on and on and on until it became apparent that Professor WENHAM's summer plans would be jeopardized—and on and on until they had to be abandoned—and meanwhile the Lusitania was sunk and Professor WENHAM became a pacifist and asked (with nearly all Tredick behind him): "What right have a few stubborn people to drag us into this terrible war?" Instead of saying: "Nice day, isn't it?" as they met on the street the villagers paused, shook their heads, and said to each other: "War is a terrible thing." The civil war veteran who said he had a purty good time and never minded nothing much 'cept the lice was undoubtedly, as Professor WENHAM observed afterward, "not very bright."

## Whoa! We Rein In.

This has got to stop. At the rate we're going a synopsis of *Khaki* would be almost as long as the book itself, and the book is only 220 pages. You can read it in an afternoon or evening easily—and, by golly, if you start it you will! One thing leads to another. Professor WENHAM's meeting in favor of universal peace led to some admirable and unsuspected resolutions on the part of PRUDENCE PERKINS. SHERRY GILSTAR's return to Tredick led to the most exciting moment in Mr. TILDEN's story, the moment when TOM GILSTAR, khaki clad, proved himself no coward. Miss PERKINS's determination led to a sacrifice which woke up Tredick to the reality of war as effectively as a thunderbolt. And that sacrifice led to SAM GREENBERG's enlisting in the army and making the first public speech of his life. The speech led to—no, there didn't have to be any leading done and Sergeant GILLIS was right close by.

This story is a drama. We shall be dumfounded if it does not get itself staged on Broadway in the coming season. As you read it you can see it divided before you into scenes and acts—and how GEORGE M. COHAN would put it over!

Mr. TILDEN will earn the gratitude of every person who reads *Khaki*—of every reader, that is, who is responsive to simple, deep flowing feelings; who remembers America prior to April 6, 1917; who kindles to the glory of America in France even as he remembers another America and that not without shame. We are thinking that if those others abroad will read this book they will understand us a bit better—it is a very American chronicle, and if it cannot excuse it can and does, in an imperfect but honest and moving fashion, explain.

## Elias Tobenkin, Reporter.

ELIAS TOBENKIN, author of *The House of Conrad*, works with ERNEST POOLE, fellow novelist, and both work for GEORGE CREEL in the Foreign Press Bureau of the Committee on Public Information. Mr. TOBENKIN, writing respecting the interview with him by JOSEPH GOLLOMB in *Books and the Book World* for June 23, says:

"I am rather glad he has put so much emphasis on the oft maligned word 'reporter' in describing my work. When I read the epoch making authors of all times and ask myself what makes them epoch making I am inevitably forced to the conclusion that it is their truthful recording of the life and civilization about them; their galvanizing of the spirit of their contemporaries, of the psychology of their day and age. In other words, their reportorial traits.

"To me the fascinating thing about DARWIN as a writer is his simple array of facts—a splendid reportorial quality. Similarly, KROPATKIN's monumental work, *Mutual Aid as a Factor in Civilization*, is a striking piece of reporting of facts, either observed by the author himself or by others, but reported splendidly by him. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fascinated me, along with thousands of other children and 'grown up children' in Russia twenty-five years ago, by its simple reportorial unfolding of the black man's struggle for freedom. In the same way I am to-day fascinated by such writers as ROBERT HERRICK, SELMA LAGERLOEF and MARTIN NEXO because they are such painstaking and artistic reporters of the life about them. Their romances are the sinews of future history."

## Verbal Vibrations.

SOME of our readers have a reprehensible habit of using slang in their communications, a thing we must warn them against, as it causes disturbing vibrations in other readers, who then write us letters in violet ink. Such is not the way to Win the War. It is, therefore, with many misgivings that we reproduce the following letter:

"Where d'ye get this stuff to the effect that *Ruggles* is funnier than *Mr. Polly*? Anything is funnier than *Kipps*, which is a prune, but *Mr. Polly* is another matter. If you want to claim that *Bunker Bean* is funnier than *Mr. Polly*, that's another thing—and *Bean*, by the way, was dedicated to WELLS, a pretty 'gesture' on WILSON's part, I thought. *Ruggles* out-marktwains MARK through the gorgeous drinking episode in Paris, but when it shifts to Montana it becomes second rate machine work. In short, Sir, your editorial dictum jars my violet vibrations and gives me a pain in my aura. Also I think you are disposed to place MARY JOHNSTON purty high; but that is a matter of disgustibuses. I have the honor to be, Sir,  
"Y'r Obd't Serv't."

## For Our Readers Only.

We refrain from giving the unhappy young man's name out of consideration for his wife and nine children. A brief glossary of the more unfamiliar atrocities in his letter is appended:

RUGGLES—A tale by HARRY LEON WILSON.

MR. POLLY—A book by an English writer.

KIPPS—A book by an English thinker.

BUNKER BEAN—A biography of NAPOLEON by a friend of BOOTH TARRINGTON.

BEAN—*Bunker Bean*, see above.

WELLS—An English publicist.

"GESTURE"—Raise the right hand smartly till the tip of the forefinger touches the lower part of the headdress or forehead above the right eye, thumb and fingers extended and joined, palm to the left, forearm inclined at about 45 degrees, hand and wrist straight; at the same time look toward the person saluted. (TWO) Drop the arm smartly by the side.

ON WILSON'S PART—On the part of a California writer.

OUT-MARKTWAINS MARK—Surpasses the work of the late SAMUEL L. CLEMENS.

GORGEOUS—Splendoriferous, coruscatorically brilliant.

DRINKING EPISODE—It must be remembered that a drink is no more than an episode in the lives of many of our fortunate fellow men.

PARIS—The place where all good Germans try to go.

MONTANA—The home of Ma Pettingill.

SECOND-RATE—Anything that would be first-rate if written by a Favorite Author.

MACHINE WORK—Typed manuscript which will not cause three compositors to go violently insane and then sell for \$27,000 in the auction room.

SIR—A familiarity.

DICTUM—Anything better left unsaid.

VIOLET VIBRATIONS—A physical phenomenon frequently mistaken for the process of thinking.

AURA—The seat of intelligence.

MARY JOHNSTON—A Virginia genius who never went to school, author of historical novels.

DISGUSTIBUSES—"A matter of disgustibuses" means "a matter of tastes." The word is from the old Latin phrase, "disgustibus non desperandum," which means: "Be disgusted if you must, but never despair," or, as we say nowadays, "Wotto, Bill, cheery-o!" Another translation has it that the Latin phrase means: "You must never despair concerning tastes," with the implication that the other fellow's may improve.

Y'R OBD'T SERV'T—An archaic expression sometimes used in the past before it was customary to dictate letters. Its abolition was secured by the Association for the Extermination of Apostrophes and Hypocrisies, but the substitute provided, "Yours respectfully," is frequently attacked as equally insincere.

## Epilogue.

We trust that with the aid of these few notes everything will be clear to our readers. We would not willingly withhold from them, &c., &c. We beg to assure them that all letters received by us are promptly and carefully read and passed upon within ten days from the receipt, &c., &c. Full postage should be included for the return of, &c., &c. We cannot be responsible for any views expressed, not even our own, and all those letters which the limited space of our waste basket makes unavailable for use will be printed. We beg to remain,

&c., &c.