

## Robinson Crusoe a Trois

"WELL, this will make a fine tale when you get home," said the British navy officer who found David on the West African coast and apparently alone; "you'll be the modern Robinson Crusoe." And that is just the defect of E. Temple Thurston's *David and Jonathan*. It is because his three Robinson Crusoes are so very modern that they become merely drawing room characters set awkwardly down in such a world as Defoe made glorious forever.

The awkwardness comes both from the characters themselves and from the form in which Mr. Thurston has cast his story. It purports to be strung together from a manuscript written by David (he has no other name in the tale) after his return from being cast away on the African coast together with John Hawkesley (the Jonathan of the title) and Joan. They are three perfectly conventional modern Britishers, such as are so often assembled in drawing room comedies on the stage of our own Empire Theatre.

David is more or less effeminate; Jonathan is one of your clumsy "red blooded" men, and Joan is a fairly representative conscienceless flirt. The African background is merely an excuse for the author to have his David discuss sex and women and life, make love to Joan and eventually leave Joan and Jonathan behind him, when a British gunboat takes him away, so Jonathan can have his one day free to ask Joan to be his wife.

Her eventful choice is of a piece with all the rest of the follies of this tale.

DAVID AND JONATHAN. By E. TEMPLE THURSTON. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.50.

## "The Navy Eternal"

ONE of the developments of the war as reflected in the British army and navy is the little group of service writers that have emerged into the world of letters. One of these began as the "Eye Witness" of the early land engagements—afterward revealed as Col. Swinton; but most of the navy writers have remained anonymous or are known from their noms de plume, as "Taffrail" or "Bartimeus."

This last named writer was first made known to us through *The Long Trick* and now we have a second book from him called *The Navy Eternal*. It is made up of fourteen chapters devoted to the navy—that floats, the navy—that flies and the navy-under-the-sea, which most readers will recognize as the three modern divisions of the sea fighting forces, surface ships, aircraft and submarines.

The tales begin with a sketch of the life of the cadets at one of Britain's naval schools and close with a reunion of a group of officers in the three arms of the "senior service" at the end of hostilities. Between these are spirited descriptions of big ship engagements; of the work of the destroyers, submarines, mine sweepers; of the armen and the submarines, the elemental tragedy of which is strikingly suggested in the sketch entitled *Overdue*. Another little tragedy (of the work of the coast patrol) is to be found in *Tuppence Apiece*, as is the penalty of age in the service shown in *The Feet of the Young Men*. The volunteer work of the yachtsmen in the motor boat fleet is described in *Gipsies of the Sea*; and the Zeebrugge operation is set forth in the chapter *St. George's Day, 1918*.

Bartimeus knows the British navy from every angle, ships, officers and men, customs of the service and its methods of fighting. Moreover, he has a profound affection for it and no little grace as a writer. So that for those who love navy stories and sea tales this book will be a source of unalloyed delight.

THE NAVY ETERNAL. By "Bartimeus." George H. Doran Company. \$1.50.

Achmed Abdullah's new novel, *The Last Manchu* (Robert J. Shores Corporation), records further adventures of Vandewater, who figured in *The Blue Eyed Manchu*.

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## "The Desert of Wheat"



ZANE  
GREY  
Author of  
"THE  
DESERT  
OF WHEAT"

By W. B. McCORMICK.

ANY one of the three elements that go to make up the background of Zane Grey's latest novel would be sufficient in itself as a theme for a novel, but when the question of the wheat supply for our allies the machinations of the I. W. W. against the wheat growers and the war are all brought into the pages of one book the reader is apt to feel he is overwhelmed with these immensities. We have a fancy that the world has had more than its fill of brutalities and physical encounters between men during the last four years and that when the world takes to reading it desires a surcease from such things, for a time at least. The world will find no such surcease in Zane Grey's new novel, but, on the contrary, passions run wild, fighting of the "Wild Western" order, class hatred and mankind at its worst.

The main theme of this tale of *The Desert of Wheat* is to show the revolt of a young American of German parentage against German influences both in his home and in his nation's life. Kurt Dorn's father, although for almost a lifetime a resident of the State of Washington, shows the German taint when our country goes to war against his home country. He tries to influence his son, he plots with the I. W. W. conspirators, and dies a victim to their successful attempt to burn his wheat fields. Then, in spite of the efforts of his fiancée to keep him at home Kurt Dorn goes to France as a soldier in our army, and earns the nickname of Demon Dorn by the way he fights with his bayonet. He is wounded, and returns to his home country, a physical and mental wreck obsessed with the idea that he is always bayoneting the enemy. But his fiancée cures him by marriage, and one leaves Kurt and Lenore with the impression that he is going to become a perfectly conventional wheat grower in the end, a bit of a snob withal, a streak of Teutonism showing out from time to time through all his days.

We charge Kurt Dorn with being a snob through the evidence presented by the letter from him to his fiancée which mars these pages. Just why Zane Grey should have made the tasteless assault he does on American women in their relations with our soldiers through the medium of Kurt's letter is not plain. Indeed the whole episode in which these letters of Kurt's and Jim Anderson's appear is lugged in badly except as serving as a connecting link between the civilian life

and army life, of which this writer obviously knows little.

Our soldiers, we believe, are very devoted to Zane Grey's novels of Western life. It will be interesting to know if they like him as well when he touches on army life and which, when he touches, he does not adorn.

THE DESERT OF WHEAT. By ZANE GREY. Harper & Brothers. \$1.50.

## "The Man Nobody Knew"

HOLWORTHY HALL'S latest book, *The Man Nobody Knew*, shows the theatricality that most of his work reveals. There is a little more feeling and thought in this book than in some of Holworthy Hall's productions, but that must not be construed as very high praise.

The incident which forms the basis of the story, the changing of a wounded man's face to resemble that of the Christ, is incredible. It is in questionable taste, to say the least, to represent surgeons as doing such a thing in scornful response to the profane suggestion of a hypochondriac. And the psychical transformation which is supposed to accompany the facial reconstruction is impossible to accept.

The characters in this story are too slightly drawn to have verisimilitude or vitality and the plot has conventional complications so crudely handled that the reader can look forward and discern how the end will come.

THE MAN NOBODY KNEW. By HOLWORTHY HALL. Dodd, Mead & Co. \$1.50.

## "Venus in the East"

COMES now another variation of the dear old story about the rich but respectable though picturesquely uncultured Westerner who fares forth to seek his misfortune in New York. This time the book is called *Venus in the East* (Venus not being the name of the far Western miner), and the author is Wallace Irwin. The narrative is readable, and Easterners who don't know any better may think it true to life, but it won't fool a single Westerner. What person outside of very comic opera would spend \$225,000 in buying a pearl necklace for a woman he has never spoken to and then disclaim the gift?

Buddy McNair, inventor of the Supercyanide Process of Gold Reduction (he doesn't need any supercyanide to reduce his gold supply once he hits New York!) decides to leave his Western home. He exchanges his corduroy trousers and swamper's boots for a new outfit. Here is what Wallace Irwin thinks a man from Colorado would do:

"Buddy had always wanted a blue suit and it was obvious, even to old Doc Naylor's none too subtle color sense, that Buddy had gone at it with his usual thoroughness and accomplished his ambition; for the loose-hanging creation which he had brought up this very morning from the Fashion Store, across from the Texas Star Hotel, presented all the brilliancy of a chemical fire. Yellow shoes fancifully trimmed with buttons to match, a cravat of daintiest lavender, a hat of bowler type somewhat tight in the band, a very tall double collar and a slippery satin shirt combined to disguise the exterior of Buddy as something he wasn't and never had been." Lifelike? Oh, no!

Buddy explains to his friend the Doc his reasons for going.

"I don't mean I've got any longing to go live on a roof garden and hire a nigger to spray me with wine out of a hose. But I'm 37 now; pretty soon I'll be 40 and past enjoying life."

"A schoolboy thought," grinned the old doctor.

"It won't do me any good hanging around Axe Creek dripping gold out of the holes in my pocket. I'm not such a darned snob, Doc," he pleaded. "Any of the boys around the camp would do the same under the circumstances. Only they might not go at it so thoroughly."

"Well, what's so superior about your programme?" the Doc obliged him.

"I'm going to get in with the big people of the world. The ones that make the wheels go round, that make pearls and caviar and grand opera pay. The kind whose pictures and dogs' pictures and babies' pictures fill up the Sunday papers, that are so much somebody that it matters more whether their bridesmaids carry orchids or roses than it does whether an ordinary citizen lives eighty years or dies of catalepsy at the age of 21. I've got the price of admission and I want to get in—with the best."

Naturally, stirring scenes are to be looked for when Buddy reaches Riverside and other sections of Manhattan. Those readers who enjoy a story irrespective of probability may care for this. Those who unreasonably ask for credibility in character description and in situation will find *Venus in the East* deficient but still readable.

Some of the character studies of New York persons are realistic, but the main persons in the story, especially Buddy, are merely 1918 models for antique figures in fiction. The novel is clean, however, and the love story is rather entertaining.

VENUS IN THE EAST. By WALLACE IRWIN. George H. Doran Company. \$1.50.

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