

"The New Day," by Scudder Middleton



By **CONSTANCE MURRAY GREENE**
SCUDDER MIDDLETON has made himself felt on an astonishing number of people which is a far, far better thing for his poetic future than having made an actual furor. We are among

those who have felt his spell and yet we cannot but feel also that a second "slender" volume which contains many of the same poems as a notable first is at a distinct disadvantage. We cannot know what impulse drove Mr. Middleton to reprint the poems from *Streets and Faces* which

we find in *The New Way*, but we do know that if ours were the dedication in the first place we should very much object to having such priceless verses as *A Heavenly Intrigue* and *Presence* lifted into another volume and placed beneath alien initials.

It is well known that any book of poems, however small, should contain at least three that are unintelligible. It is not wise for a poet to be too simple. You can understand nearly everything that Scudder Middleton writes, but here and there, as in *Children*, will be found the saving bits of mystery. This, by the way, is among the poems reprinted from his earlier collection. It is fine to remember the simple and trenchant power of such lines as these from a song to Life called *The Return*:

"He has come back!

"Now we shall keep him in our hearts
 And heal him by the music there.
 We shall give War the truthful name
 And snatch the roses from his hair.

"We shall make songs and cities now,
 Chart skies and tame the eastern fire,
 And build an earthly Paradise
 For him by engines of desire."

This same spirit will be found in the first poem, 1919, while for sheer beauty of expression such as many poets would go far to find there are verses like *Carnival*, which opens on a particularly lovely image:

"Why do you go before the maple leaves
 Open, like little hands, to welcome
 spring?"

and *Romance*, from which we quote these lines:

"Why should we argue with the falling
 dust
 Or tremble in the traffic of the days?
 Our hearts are music makers in the clouds,
 Our feet are running on the heavenly
 ways."

THE NEW DAY. By **SCUDDER MIDDLETON.** The Macmillan Company. \$1.

Mary Heaton Vorse has promised to do a sequel to *The Prestons* and *Boni & Liveright* hope to have the book ready by fall.

How Ellis Wasted His Wasted Time

By **BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.**

ELLIS PARKER BUTLER has written a very little book called *Goat-Feathers*, a jeremiad over his own procrastinations, which are the thieves of his bank account. Time wasting is, we believe, the mother of genius. But Ellis will have nothing to do with genius. He is a cash-down, go-and-get-it, what-er-yer-got-in-yer-jeans business man. And thereby hangs a moral that adorns his tale.

"Goat-feathers [and now prick up your ears, ye beautiful wastrels, and gird up your attention, ye unproductive lounge lizards and cosmic loafers] are the little distractions that take your time from the real business of life. They are the Great-est Things on Earth [why the dithyrambic capitals?—to make a man look like a goat."

Ellis tells us that he might have been as great a humorist as Mark Twain or George Ade or Chauncey Depew, an' everything, if he hadn't gone into This

and That and come home with What and When—and put them to bed. He has spent the best part of his life answering telephone calls to go out and examine the quality of the corner nectar, requests to sit on Committees to Test the Sunlight on Grass, to attend balls in Flushing, Greenwich Village and buck and wing choruses in Jack's, to aid in "drives" of all kinds, to write an obituary about a man who dusted his roll for a ten spot, to shoot Kelly pool with Don Marquis and Paul Thompson, to serve with Abe Baermann on a Committee to Endow Bald Heads with Wigs and so on.

But personally we believe this is the best part of life. All the rest is humbug. The time we wasted was the time that was our own. The time in which we were "useful" belonged to the boss—and it is really the boss that bolsheviks the human soul.

At the end of the book Mr. Butler raises his finger admonishingly to the whole world and says, "The time we waste on excursions off the main line of our road

to our goal is the difference between success and half-success; often it is the difference between success and failure."

Now, why did Ade, Tarkington and Chambers an' everybody beat Ellis Parker to the Temple of Mammon and scoop out the nuggets? Not because they wasted less time than Ellis Parker Butler—but because they knew how to waste time. Mr. Butler's time has been wasted; Mr. Ade knew how to waste time. That's the difference. The greatest book that was ever written was written by a man who wasted most of his time with pirates and other useful luxuries—one Cervantes. The secret of "success" (whatever that word means) is to dramatize, exploit and capitalize all your wasted time. Two hours for work, five hours for sleep and eighteen hours to make a damphool of yourself is the proper slogan.

We know a great writer who upset a full whiskey bottle one day accidentally while wasting his time in a booze mosque, and he wrote a superb column about it; another month he spent idling away in Kelly pool, and out of it came, based on that fascinating waste of time, a series of magnificent metaphysically humorous paragraphs.

It all depends, Mr. Butler, who wastes time. We must regretfully write it down that you are not anointed by the Muse of Loafers, else you would not look upon yourself as the goat of the Spirit of Procrastination.

It is true, you have written a readable little book on your wasted time—but you wouldn't have written it if you hadn't wasted the time. And instead of deerying your goat-feathers and moralizing we advise you (bad business, advising!) to go on wasting time, keep telling us all about it, stop preaching, and your goat-feathers will turn to golden sheaves.

GOAT-FEATHERS. By **ELLIS PARKER BUTLER.** Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 50 cents.

Next week we shall print a review by Joseph Hergesheimer of Joseph Conrad's new novel.

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