

"The Gamesters"

TO be brought up within the shadow of a gambling house might seem to be an excellent reason why the son and daughter of such an establishment should not follow that ancient profession, on the homeopathic principle that like cures like. But such was not the manner in which this law worked with Adam and Eve De Ros, children of the Chevalier De Ros, who called himself an Englishman, who drifted through Europe in the early years of the eighteenth century keeping gaming houses. The reader of H. C. Bailey's sprightly novel, *The Gamesters*, is introduced to this trio in 1728 in Dresden, when King Frederick William of Prussia was paying a royal visit to Augustus the Strong. You sense Eve's quality in the opening scene, alluring to men by her physical presence, her superb courage, her rapierlike wit that flashed out, bit and was back in the scabbard in a trice. She might have been the original of Clyde Fitch's *Girl With the Green Eyes!*

Eve encounters the youthful Frederick the Great and thinks little of him; as men do more and more these days now that they have seen to what lengths such a spirit, reincarnated in the late Emperor William of Germany, can go to achieve his base ends. Frederick is not a little the main impulse of this tale, Frederick in the larger sense, and Eve's indomitable spirit and her love of adventure. It is this spirit, driving Adam along with Eve, that sends the gallant pair out to the rescue of the stupid English giant Rashleigh, who had been kidnapped by Frederick William's soldiers. They make into a Prussian grenadier. It is this spirit that, although not in accordance with history, which enables Eve and Adam to save the young Frederick's friend Lieut. Keith from the King of Prussia's hands when the famous plot of Frederick's to escape into France is nipped in the bud. Familiar with the life of Frederick the Great will remember Lieut. von Katte and his death "by musketry," as the court-martial sentences read, at Custrin. Mr. Bailey calls von Katte Keith and sends him off in a carriage with that silly Frankfurt maiden Lilla von Voight, simply because 'tis prettier so. And it is this spirit that drove Eve and Adam to aiding the British Ambassador at Munich to cure a certain "Mr. Neville" of a foolish flirtation with a petty princess.

Eve's success at this game made spies of sister and brother for the English. And in following Frederick in his first Silesian campaign they had trials enough, such as are the portion of spies, in fiction at least. Not the least of Eve's troubles is the pursuit of her by "Mr. Neville," who is no less a personage than the Duke of Severa and who would like to be an imperturbable Englishman of the Guardsman type, but who is often made to look very foolish by the circumstances of Frederick's campaign and by Eve's wilfulness. Since nothing can resist that type of Briton, in the end Eve marries him and Adam has a marital adventure of his own. No novel of the day can hold a candle to this for gallant adventures, sprightly dialogue and quickly shifting scene. If it is not a profound historical romance, it has the admirable merit of holding the reader in thrall from first page to last, which is what all books are written for and not all achieve so successfully as this one of Mr. Bailey's.

THE GAMESTERS. BY H. C. BAILEY. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$1.75.



ZANE GREY and DON CARLOS, the FAMOUS MOTION PICTURE HORSE.

Ian Hay Writes Yank Talk

WE have heard much of the spiritual miracles that were to be worked by the war, of how through its influence we were to become better men and women, better citizens, more patriotic; to be awakened to a finer sense of obligation to the peoples of other nations. Our artists were to be broadened, our writers were to be lifted to a higher plane. But we confess we have been disappointed with the result. New York women, for example, have not learned to keep quiet while the national anthem is being played in theatres or restaurants. Our youths have not improved their manners in public. Our artists have not yet visibly been moved to any great heights, nor have our writers. But one literary miracle at least has been worked by the war. This is that a Scot, of all people, has learned to write like an American!

Proof is to be found in the pages of Ian Hay's *The Last Million*, a book devoted to describing how the American Army went to England and France; what social, climatic and military experiences it enjoyed and endured there; and how they helped to win the war, to finish the task begun in part by the first hundred thousand, one of whom Major (Ian Hay) Beith was. Strictly as an American war-book Major Beith's narrative will not compare with Col. Frederick Palmer's *America in France* or with Gibbons's *And They Said We Wouldn't Fight*. Rather is it for Ian Hay's style that the reader will find his profit in reading this engaging and amusing tale. For it is decidedly flattering to us that a man with so great a charm of style as has been Ian Hay's in the past should imitate the

manner of contemporary American humor, and do it so well.

What he has done in his story, which is dedicated to "That born fighter and modern crusader, the American dough-boy," is to follow the fortunes of two young officers and a special group of selective service men across the ocean on a transport through their brief experiences in England, in the training camps in France and finally through that great battle in the Argonne, with a closing episode in Paris the day the armistice was signed.

One of the young officers is describing how an English sergeant talked to his class at the American training camp after a drill:

"He lined us up and said: 'Well, gentlemen, I have run over your points and before dismissal' the parade I should like to say that I only wish the President of the United States was here to see you. If he did catch a sight of you I know that his first words would be "Thank Gawd from the bottom of my heart, we've got a navy."'"

Then there's Al Thompson's reproof to Joe McCarthy, privates both, for Joe's kick on going 4,000 miles to find war: "Listen, Joe, that stuff don't go here. I know you have been mighty seasick, and you're sore on the food and the monotony, and the other little glooms that come around on a slow trip like this. But whenever I git sore on things just now, like we all do, I just remember them dirty bums over there marching through Belgium with little babies on their bayonets; and, then, well, all I care about is getting over there and killing any guy that calls himself a Dutchman. Let me kill a few of them first—and even if they kill me after, I should worry."

We pronounce "little glooms" and "dirty bums" something of a minor literary triumph. And there was the young officer who was shy of social customs and did not understand what the card, stuck up on the mess bulletin board, announcing Lady Wyvern-Gryphon's card of invitation to an "At Home," meant. One of his brother officers explained R. S. V. P. thus, "That's the reference number of the file, and you quote it in replying"—which is very good military American humor indeed. We could go on quoting indefinitely, but will refrain after this final one. Private Ed Gillette has got a paper from home and it has made him homesick, and he confesses to it, adding: "Oh, Boy! when I get back home after this war if the Statue of Liberty ever wants to see Ed Gillette again she'll have to turn around to do it."

THE LAST MILLION. BY IAN HAY. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$1.50.

"Cervantes"

THE MASTER SPIRITS OF LITERATURE series, to judge from the first three volumes, offers something more than a scholastic handling of old material. The *Tolstoy* and *Cervantes*, which we have examined, are very readable presentations of the life and work of two master spirits. They are, particularly the *Cervantes*, nearly as romantic as some of the works they describe and should appeal to a wider public than is found within the walls of schools and universities. They are scholarship made bearable.

Prof. Rudolph Schevill's *Cervantes* is the latest addition to the series. While this is not so well written or so dispassionately conceived as Prof. Noyes's *Tolstoy*, it is rendered rather more attractive through the intrinsic interest of the facts. It is known that the author of *Don Quixote* wove into the fabric of his tales, poems and plays many of the incidents of his own life, and it becomes evident to the reader of this life that beside the adventurous career of the writer even *Don Quixote* seems a trifle pale.

In the case of *Cervantes* the biographer is baffled by a complicated mass of more or less fragmentary and contradictory details and he must often resort to narrative portions of the works of the author. Prof. Schevill, while he bases few direct assertions upon such evidence, must of necessity theorize a good deal in order to make a fairly complete story of his hero's life.

To one who is not a Cervantist and makes no pretensions to an academic knowledge of the facts, it seems that Prof. Schevill is occasionally overzealous in making out a complete biography where an incomplete one would serve as well. At least we should willingly accept an explanation of such facts as are accessible and rest content with the assertion that much is unknown.

We cannot close our brief catalogue of adverse remarks without stating what we consider one of the weaknesses of the book. Prof. Schevill is constantly on the defensive when he refers to Cervantes's family, as if it were his affair to see to it that no slur is cast upon the character of the great Spaniard's sisters or brothers or daughters. The following words occur in connection with an incident of minor importance, wherein Cervantes's daughter was possibly implicated in a murder: "the episode continues to be perplexing and painful." We have italicized the last word. One might imagine Prof. Schevill a pious descendant of the family.

This new life of Cervantes is stimulating: it goads one to pick up *Don Quixote* once again (that is if one ever opened the book at all). After all, can much more be said of such a study?

CERVANTES. BY RUDOLPH SCHEVILL. Duffield & Co. \$2.25.

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