

"The Old Card"

AMONG the few worth while novels of stage life that exist it is perfectly safe to place Roland Pertwee's *The Old Card*. And this is not at all because it is an adequately constructed novel as novels are supposed to go. Indeed it is a very bad novel if we are to apply the tests of Prof. Saintsbury and Mr. Wilson Fullet. There is no more construction to it than there is to a jellyfish. It draws in here and it bulges out there and, best of all, the author has written a preface in which he assures the prospective reviewers that he knows all about it, fully intended it so to be, and doesn't care a hang, anyway.

The Old Card is a series of sketches and events that might almost be termed short stories strung together and related by a single personality. Eliphalet Cardomay, the provincial actor of the old school, who is the one, undisguised hero of the narrative, is a creation that becomes a fully rounded characterization by the time the end of the book is reached. He is the simple, charming, courtly actor of the days of old, when the player took his art much as a good Christian takes his religion. Eliphalet is not a good actor as we understand the art of the stage to-day. The reader will gather that he was wont to rant and tear a passion to tatters with the best of them. He undoubtedly over-emphasized and posed and strutted. Also we know that he wore his hair long. He is a type that has vanished, but he was a type to be loved.

Roland Pertwee manages to inject a gentle humor into his depiction of this quaint old personality that never holds Eliphalet up to ridicule. Rather does the reader feel a warm affection for the player steadily growing as the episodes are unrolled. He is so pathetically sincere in his undeviating determination to remain faithful to the old ideals. Changing usages and manners do not change him, and as his clientele inevitably falls away from him until even his backers must needs forsake the sinking ship he remains still the same, a follower of dead and gone players, his vision obscured in the rolling mists of outmoded tradition.

The series of incidents that unfold the character of Eliphalet show that he never was, or could have been, a great actor. He possessed a mellow, pleasing voice and a certain temperament adapted to the shallow heroics of mid-Victorian drama. But that was all. The rest was a determination, an overwhelming desire, a will o' the wisp.

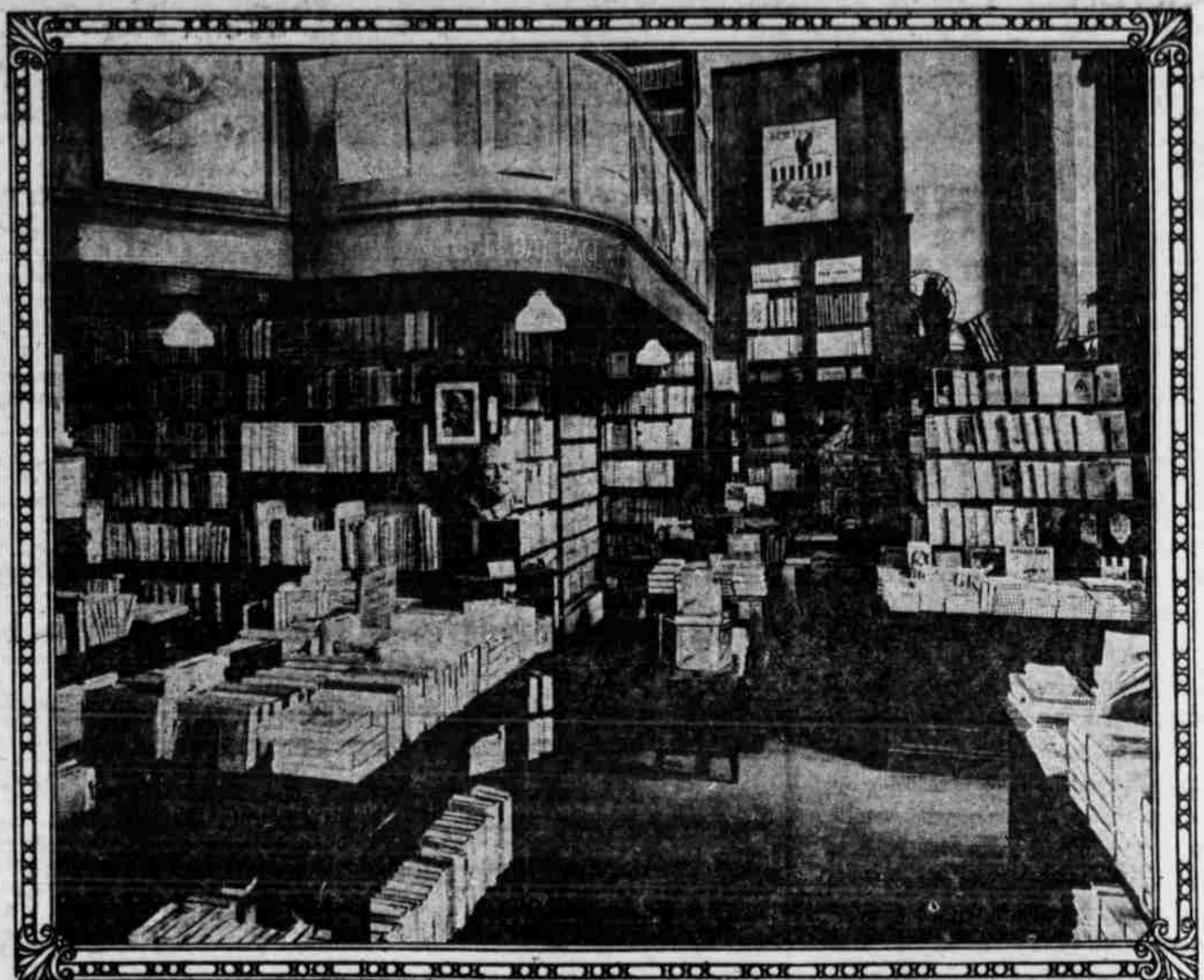
As the reader follows Eliphalet through the few last years of his stage career, years that bring him face to face with his faithless, divorced wife and give him her daughter for his own, the realization comes that an extremely skilful delineator of character is to be found in Roland Pertwee. He has completed a breathing personage that will afford many a pleasant hour to those who enjoy good fiction. There is no straining for effect in the novel. Naturally there is a villain, a certain gentleman named May, who might have stepped directly out of a Tom Taylor drama. But he does not count for much. If one were to search for a more overshadowing villain it would perhaps be well to regard the ubiquitous cinemas that occasionally cast their ominous clouds across the lofty expanses of the old actor's mind.

THE OLD CARD. BY ROLAND PERTWEE.
Bonis & Liveright.

"Polished Ebony"

THE two dentists, who jointly own the Gold Crown Ice Cream Parlor in one of Octavus Roy Cohen's negro stories in the collection called *Polished Ebony*, recall another dentist, by name "McTeague," whose ambition and dream it was to have swinging from his office window a huge gilded tooth, a molar with enormous prongs, something gorgeous and attractive, and made out of real French gilt and no German substitute. And if Mr. Cohen's story, which is called *Painless Extraction*, does no more than to recall Frank Norris's great novel it has accomplished some good.

Mr. Cohen writes of the negro city dwellers in the South—the real dressy and stylish kind who wear diamond rings when they are not doing the washing and ride in automobiles when Providence and the lottery are kind, which may account for their remarkable language. For if there are negroes anywhere, off the stage or outside of the funny stories in a newspaper, who talk like some of Mr. Cohen's



There is no book printed that they don't sell, one time or another, here. This is the Doubleday Page Book Store in the Pennsylvania Station, New York, where everybody rides, everybody reads and everybody comes after everything between covers.

Polished Ebony people than Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris and Mark Twain and E. K. Means and *More E. K. Means* have missed a trick or two.

That the negro is malaprop and is fond of big words, the bigger the better, and that he often gets stuck in his words like the fly in the molasses is doubtless true of the city as well as of the plantation negro. But it is not easy to believe in the reality of Mr. Cohen's colored folks when he makes them say "criminal liable" and "public respiration" and "eighteen carrots" and "plutonic friendship" and "passional sediment" and even the following:

"You know what the poeck says in Latin, Mis' Atcherson—Honey swat key molly pants."

As a matter of fact, although some of these stories are amusing as stories, the humor, if it is humor, is largely in the language and malapropisms, instead of in the negro psychology and character, as in the case of the E. K. Means negro stories, for example.

The collection contains nine stories, of which the first one about the diamond ring, called *All That Glitters*, is much the best and has as many interesting turns and complications as the Maupassant story of the necklace—almost. You might as well

expect a woman not to know her own child as her own diamond ring. Anyway Mrs. Elzevir Nesbit knows hers. Mr. Cohen is the author of the successful play *The Crimson Alibi* and the book of that name.

POLISHED EBONY. BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN. Dodd, Mead & Co.

A Letter to the Editor

By GEORGE GORDON.

SIR: Some twelve months ago you sent me for review a volume of essays, *The Dartmoor Window Again* (Longmans, Green), written over the signature of Beatrice Chase by Miss Olive Katherine Pan, a devout Anglican believer in the goodness of God, to whom she daily hymns a Te Deum, now that her eyes have beheld the bleak country of Mr. Thomas Hardy's returned native. She keeps her soul dressed ever ready to receive the final sacrament of death. She gushes her blessings upon high heaven for the daily miracle of the dawn. The night is ushered in to her consciousness with anthems of gratitude, and this, not in the Garden of Eden, but in a world as forbidding as the poles, the frontier of hell, where convicts languish for unspeakable sins, and

the hound of the Baskervilles bays a grinning, half mad moon.

I have long debated with myself the advisability of in any way referring to this book. Though I know you doubt it, I have a conscience, a fellow feeling for all those who write, and invariably a certain pity for mine enemy when in answer to my prayers for vengeance upon his head, he finally writes and publishes his book. Because her philosophy is so futile a weapon against the destroying violence of nature, because she is (self-absorbed in her petty cares, renaming the flowers in her garden, rewriting the letters she receives) all unaware of the fatuity of her thought in a world that, having descended and stayed five years in purgatory, rises to a new life—I am peculiarly ashamed of myself, for I can think of no good word that can be said either for Miss Pan's complacent acceptance of things as they are or of her humble kneeling before the image of Tomlinson's God.

I appeal to your readers. There may be one among the thousands who can write upon the uses of inadvertence.

WE'LL say that Clarence Budington Kelland's title, *The Little Moment of Happiness*, is one of the most felicitous labels ever affixed.

The New York Tribune calls this a "tremendous" novel!

Mare Nostrum

By VICENTE BLASCO IBANEZ

the author of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, *The Shadow of the Cathedral*, *Blood and Sand*, *La Bodega*

The publishers take the liberty of commending this marvelous, new novel to every reader of *The New York Sun*

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"When you have come to the end of the last page you will say aloud, (and no 'if' about it) that this is as great a book as the author's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. . . . There is passage after passage of pure beauty. . . . To all such as love blue water this book will be one of the great novels of all time."—*New York Sun*.

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"We like it immensely."—*Chicago Daily News*.

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