

ABRAHAM CAHAN, INTERPRETER OF RUSSIAN JEWS IN AMERICA

PROSE EPIC OF A RACE

Abraham Cahan's "Rise of David Levinsky" Is a Remarkable Story of the Life of the Russian Jew in America

"THE Rise of David Levinsky" is an epic of a race, a country, an industry and a man. It is one of the most important books that have come from the publishers in a number of years, and in it Abraham Cahan—pronounced with the accent on the first syllable—has given us, without the slightest aid of a title, a more vivid and more powerful picture of the Russian Jew in America than any other writer has ever given us. It is a story of a Jewish boy of a "melting pot" that did not melt in his place of a decade ago. The author sketches minutely and sympathetically the life of a Jewish boy in the Russian ghetto, through his Talmudic training, his "rebirth" when he arrives in immigrant New York, his early struggles for existence, and finally his rise to paramount importance in the great cloth industry. There are many "David Levinskys" in the United States—although their names may be Smith, Kaplan, O'Brien or Giovanni—very busy, hard-working, and does with pride to some leader in the American, but from the shop to a powerful position. But how many of these self-made men are as devoid of the idealism which means happiness as the Levinsky of Mr. Cahan's book? With exquisite art the author has drawn the Jewish people in this country, has brought into the life of his hero the atmosphere of solitude and desolation of soul amid thousands of "friends" and millions of dollars. With a fine feeling for the more subtle manifestations of character he has drawn his David as passionately in love with woman as he was thrilled by his own prowess, but as unrelenting and cold in his treatment of the individual who stands as he was of the men and machines which were the stepping stones to his success. It is difficult to recall another book that so faithfully interprets and clarifies the Jewish psychology as does "David Levinsky." There is none of the cheap sentimental clapnet which characterizes the average East Side volume of short stories. "Rise of David Levinsky" is a masterpiece of the Jew, the Russian Jew, the Jew to face with the processes which make the idiosyncrasies of the ghetto natural; any other action would therefore be required as unfaithful. If the average American, suddenly endowed with the ability to understand Yiddish, should hear a mother of the ghetto call down upon her child the name of fifteen years' cholera plagues for having spoiled the milk, she would be committed some other equally heinous sin, surprise would probably give way to disgust, and that in turn to wrath. But any less powerful oath in the mouth of one of Cahan's characters would be ineffective and untrue to life, and instead of being revolted at the invective the reader is made to feel the naive imagination of the Yiddish mother, who immediately after fondles her best loved to her breast. This is but one illustration of many that might be chosen in which the author makes his characters live their natural lives, but still makes them understandable to the average American. Particularly effective is the description of David's life in Russia—how, even after his mother was killed in attempting to wreak vengeance upon Gentile children who

had attacked her boy, he continued his studies in the Talmudic seminary, living through the generosity of the Jews who felt their duty to support the dependent students. This life is typical of the Russian Jew of that period, as are David's experiences in the early years of his New York career. The book is unusually lengthy, numbering



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520 pages, but it reads like a short story; it is full of interest from cover to cover. One feels that Mr. Cahan is writing his own life story, but only in the general outline. It is a story of a Jewish boy in this autobiography. The paths of Cahan and Levinsky parted in Russia when the hero entered the Talmud School and the author a teacher's college. Ever after the author lived a life of idealism and ideals; Levinsky's life was hard and material. Throughout Cahan knows intimately the conditions he describes, having long been a leader of the Jews in this country. His experiences as a labor agitator and editor of the Jewish Socialist and labor paper, Vorwarts, gave him an intimate knowledge of the growth of the cloth industry and how the Russian and Polish Jews gained control of it. Although David is the central figure, every character is complete. The four women who affected his life are real human beings. The reader feels he knows them and knows how they would act in any particular situation. The minor characters and the numerous incidents are sketched exceedingly well. V. H. L. THE RISE OF DAVID LEVINSKY, By Abraham Cahan, New York: Harper & Bros., \$1.50.

PAINTED ON A BROAD CANVAS

F. Tennyson Jesse's New Novel Belongs to the School of Thackeray and Fielding

Great names, old and modern, in the lineage of the English novel are recalled, or more than that, come spontaneously to mind in the reading of F. Tennyson Jesse's new novel, "Secret Bread." Yet the recollection of Fielding, Thackeray, De Morgan, Meredith, Hardy, Bennett, Samuel Butler, Philipps means no ascription of servile adherence to their modes or moods, no ascription of imitation, conscious or unconscious. Miss Jesse has won her way to a prestige that stands on its own merits in "Beggars on Horseback" and "The Milky Way," technically informed as that was at times. Her new novel has the panoramic narrative sweeping a protracted career of Thackeray or De Morgan; it has the interest in motives, temperaments, and psychology involved in Meredith and Hardy; it has the intimate knowledge, the native insight into neighborhoods and into parochial folk of Hardy, Philipps and Bennett. Cornwall is the neighborhood of the scenario and the mid-Victorian era the time of the action. The dialogue uses the Cornish dialect, but not to repetition and unintelligibility, as has been the case in the writings of some genre novelists. The "Beggars on Horseback" is a novel of a full canvas densely populated in its evidence, but Miss Jesse's people, however unimportant, are not puppets with names, but differentiated individuals. And her use of her technique of prose is important in the fiction world of their interlarded lives. They are carefully and believably characterized in their deeds and their lives, their hopes and their trials. It is not a novel of philosophy or of action, but one of life's procession of daily routine. There is nothing sensational about "Secret Bread," but there is a depth of feeling and an intensity of the emotional. It is a book for the serious reader, not the helter-skelter galloping from incident to incident. It is a book that should have a wide appeal to a large circle of readers. A great hand which has no use for the thriller, but which has a sense of the dramatic, is in its lighter reading. SECRET BREAD, By F. Tennyson Jesse, New York: George H. Doran Company, Price, \$1.50.

How to Keep Well

The advantage of human life through the war has given a more vital importance to the question of conserving life. Accordingly, the health books that are appearing are to be considered with other than the old-time levity. Considerable impetus to this work of conservation is given by two health books just off the press, "Health First," by Henry Dwight Chapin, M. D., and "Physical Training for Business Men," by H. Irving Hancock. Doctor Chapin's work is notable for its simplicity and consequent lucidity. His style intimately suggests Barrett Wendell. The carefully laid chapters outline the normal development of the human being from babyhood through adolescence to old age. A goodly portion of the book is devoted to the discussion of the various causes that make for good health or the lack of it. The second of these books, that by H. Irving Hancock, is devoted more to the how than to the why. It is health hints interpreted into action. The author has arranged a series of corrective setting-up drills that are especially adapted for business and professional men. The illustrations dispense with the need of an instructor to manage the simple exercises. HEALTH FIRST, THE PHYSICIAN'S ART OF LIVING, By Henry Dwight Chapin, M. D., professor in the New York Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital, New York: The Century Company, \$1.50. PHYSICAL TRAINING FOR BUSINESS MEN, By H. Irving Hancock, author of "Judith's Comb," New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$1.75.

The Inevitable Triangle

Shifting of moods and scenes marks "Wings of the Cardinal," by Bertha A. Crowell. This is described by the publishers as having no mission but to entertain, yet it possesses some sterner substance as a foundation to its mere interest of fiction. There are romance and sentiment and action, and it is a most interesting and varied psychology, mainly feminine. The maid of the plot is an unlettered, care-free, untamed child of nature, whose lack of all that makes for refinement and culture is exceeded only by her rare beauty of tawny hair, passion-slumberous eyes, striking face and figure. Her beauty is so rare and so is her temperament; she is called a wild and untamed creature. The author is a student of high breeding of personal distinction, of eminent experience in the world and its affairs; he is evincing, sympathetic, dispassionate, a well-calculated and an epigrammatic of phrase and philosophy, yet love as well as an epiphany attends his romance with the wild creature. But their ill-matched mating is star-crossed. Another man appears, and the right man, but to entertain, yet in fictional trigonometry, and the inevitable triangle is finally solved, though the factors of genuine love, content and happiness at last. The author moves her story from Texas to California, to Kansas City, California, New Mexico as well as stations, and she moves them without long stage waits, too. The deeper interests of the book lie in an untamed girl's reactions to the temperance of an infatuated man of the world and her growth into a different womanhood. WINGS OF THE CARDINAL, By Bertha A. Crowell, New York: George H. Doran Company, \$1.50.

Cabell, Poet

James Branch Cabell is a "singer of songs, born out of his due time." He has the rhythmic facility, respect for meter and melody and love of "old, unhappy, far-off things." Coupled with these, he possesses a desire for the antique that is not only to embrace the stories of antiquity, but the forms as well. His "From the Hidden Way" is a book collected first for the man who thinks that a living woman and has heard the chime of the bell in modern streets. And it is for the man, secondarily, who prefers the ballad to free verse and artifice to formlessness. The poet ranges in his volume from inspiration to graceful empiricism. There are a number of lyrics that brook no dispute. There are banal passages that every writer must be charged with when his proximity exceeds his passion. But as a whole his work justifies itself. In rondo, sonnet and tercet he sings the familiar song of love of regret and of the gods. The test of all poetry is surely this: that the poet must convince us that he believes in heroes. Because Mr. Cabell does make us believe in his heroes in the field of religious education. Just what these changes will be he does not attempt to predict, but he does set forth in a clear and practical way some of the conflicts which are imminent unless the present method of religious education. Although optimistic the book is a challenge, and it will in all probability provoke spirited discussion. A SOCIAL TRIGONY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, By James Branch Cabell, New York: Robert M. McBride Company.

A Challenge to the Church

"A Social Trigonometry of Religious Education," by James Branch Cabell, New York: Robert M. McBride Company. "A Social Trigonometry of Religious Education," by James Branch Cabell, New York: Robert M. McBride Company. "A Social Trigonometry of Religious Education," by James Branch Cabell, New York: Robert M. McBride Company.

The Child Jesus

Coningsby Dawson has added another to the long list of tales of what might have happened to the child Jesus. He calls it "The Seventh Christmas," and in it he tells of the sadness of Mary that she has no birthday present for her little boy. She comforts him by describing his birth and the visit of the Three Kings of the East with their gifts. She has kept the gifts and shows them to him, and while the lad still wears the crown and the royal robes that had been in one of the caskets, the youngest of the Kings arrives to verify the story that he had taken back to Persia of the birth of a new King under the star. It all might easily have happened, and Mr. Dawson had well appear in a convincing manner. The book will serve very well as a holiday gift to be used by those who wish to remember their friends with something appropriate to the season. THE SEVENTH CHRISTMAS, By Coningsby Dawson, New York: Henry Holt & Co., Fifty cents.

Wee MacGregor Again

When J. J. Bell introduced us to MacGregor Robinson, we were told that he had created a character that is likely to live in English literature. Consequently, the first hope of those who turn over the pages of his latest volume of short stories will be that the little Scotch lad will appear in it. They will not be disappointed, for the lad is there. He is not in all the stories, it is true, but other boys with different names give their parents and their aunts the same exercises in meeting juvenile logic that made him famous. The charm of Mr. Bell's stories of children lies in their kindly feeling and their tolerant sympathy for the foibles of youth. Every parent ought to read his latest volume. WE MACGREGOR AGAIN, By J. J. Bell, author of "Wee MacGregor," New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, \$1.50.

PERSIAN LIFE IN MINIATURE

H. C. Dwight Captures the Spirit of the East and Imprisons It in a Book

The average American knows so little about Persia that it will be almost like a journey of discovery to read "Persian Miniatures," by H. C. Dwight. And in these days when such names as Hamadan, Ispahan and Teheran meet us in the daily news it is particularly appropriate that such a journey of discovery should be made in order to comprehend more fully just what part this ancient country will play in the final boundary and territorial readjustment which is like to follow the world war. Mr. Dwight in the introduction of his book, although disclaiming any intention of writing for the student of the Orient, admits that he is prompted by a desire to make a shadow-land a little less shadowy. "The book is full of that spirit of place which comes only from a first-hand experience in a country and with its people. No matter if one is not greatly interested in far-distant Persia, there is one chapter in the book which is certain to please, for it gives some clear and practical information about a much-discussed but little-known subject—Persian rugs. Mr. Dwight is a student of the Orient and the mid-Victorian era the time of the action. The dialogue uses the Cornish dialect, but not to repetition and unintelligibility, as has been the case in the writings of some genre novelists. The "Beggars on Horseback" is a novel of a full canvas densely populated in its evidence, but Miss Jesse's people, however unimportant, are not puppets with names, but differentiated individuals. And her use of her technique of prose is important in the fiction world of their interlarded lives. They are carefully and believably characterized in their deeds and their lives, their hopes and their trials. It is not a novel of philosophy or of action, but one of life's procession of daily routine. There is nothing sensational about "Secret Bread," but there is a depth of feeling and an intensity of the emotional. It is a book for the serious reader, not the helter-skelter galloping from incident to incident. It is a book that should have a wide appeal to a large circle of readers. A great hand which has no use for the thriller, but which has a sense of the dramatic, is in its lighter reading. SECRET BREAD, By F. Tennyson Jesse, New York: George H. Doran Company, Price, \$1.50.

Full-Length Portrait

A Thackerayan conception is the basis of G. B. Lancaster's new novel, "The Fool Divine." In treatment it is a touch of Joseph Conrad, the marine novelist. These two hints as to mode and expression, however, are not to be taken as a charge that Mr. Lancaster is imitative. They simply mean that he has planned on the broad life-career scheme beloved of Thackeray and that he has the love of the sea of Conrad, or say, Scott, with something, too, of the variety of fiction. "The Fool Divine" is none of your episodic, rapid-fire novels, which treat of a hero's single phase, from his love to his ending the happy world to his arms, all within a month. This book is a full-length, life story with an adventurer-dreamer-lover for its principal figure. There is action in the narrative of his career, and there is keen, understanding psychology of his temperament. His forebears, we are told, were a long line of visionary, hardy, adventuring spirits. The hero, a young man of the sea, named like hot wine in his blood and the Spanish Main had become heaven's own chivalry to him. How he surmounted the dull routine of commerce and changed the counting house for the free, open, frank life of the sea and romance till the lady of his dreams became the lady of reality is told in a novel far superior to the rack of adventure tales and sea yarns. THE FOOL DIVINE, By G. B. Lancaster, New York: George H. Doran Company, \$1.50.

Geography for General Use

Doubleday, Page & Co.'s Geographical Manual and New Atlas is so good that it ought to have been better. The demand for adequate maps of the war zones is met by a group of excellent charts showing the parts of the world where the fighting is in progress. They are accompanied by a good index which makes it easy to find the places mentioned in the text. There is also a dictionary of pronunciation of the war names which will be most useful to those unfamiliar with the European languages. Six pages are given to a summary of the war.

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JOURNAL FROM OUR LEGATION IN BELGIUM

By HUGH GIBSON

First Secretary

Published by DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO. Garden City, N. Y.

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