

LITERARY OFFERINGS OF THE WEEK

Late Summer Fiction Occupies Critic's Attention

Painless Mind Analysis

"THE HEEL OF ACHILLES," by E. M. Delafield. (The Macmillan Co.)

LYDIA, of *The Heel of Achilles*, is first seen a child of 12 complacently enjoying the sensation of being an orphan because as such she is the center of attention. She is too clever, however, to claim that attention crudely. Hers is the astute egotism that gains satisfaction from an apparently sacrificial attitude, and she quickly sees the value of her grandfather's admonition, "Always let other people talk about themselves." She makes that a guiding principle and in so doing has the pleasurable sensation of always having the upperhand, besides gaining a reputation for quiet sympathy. Even as a child she knows how to manage her simple-hearted aunts for her own purposes without letting them know that they are managed. She is determined, but never crude, ambitious, and perfectly invulnerable as far as real affection goes. Only her grandfather sees through her and he tags her for what she is, a "situation-snatcher." That scarcely touches her, however. What is he but a dying old man? So it is no surprise to see her work herself gradually and complacently from backwater poverty to London and a dressmaker's establishment, thence via authorship to the position of secretary to an apparently great man, and finally into a safe and glorious marriage, though she makes it appear that she is conferring favors, to the clergyman son of nobility. It is her child, Jennie, that is the final Heel of Achilles, for Jennie is the only person in the world for whom Lydia really cares and Jennie resents her methods. From this point Lydia's story becomes the pathetic one of a mother who loves her child too much and too selfishly. She plays her old, unconscious game of sacrifice to gain the importance it gives her; wants to shield Jennie and keep for herself all the joy of rendering service. "For herself the *beau rôle*, for Jennie that of foil." But Jennie revolts. At the outbreak of the war she marries an aviator entirely against Lydia's wishes, breaks away absolutely, and in this tragedy Lydia, discovering that everyone's sympathies are with Jennie, almost finds herself. But not quite. At the end we see her, just as Jennie has driven away, once more "the center of attention and compassion" as "the scattered groups of relations and friends coalesced, surrounding her."

The weakest point in the whole delicately-woven tale is the fact that because we see Lydia so completely no one else emerges as more than a foil to her. Even Jennie, who is apparently a strong, wholly modern child, is sketched in palely behind Lydia and we have little but the outward aspects of her revolution. Lydia's husband might almost be omitted, so vague is he. In fact, her whole married life is scarcely touched on, the turning point being long after her husband's death, and all we know is that he was disillusioned at some time during his marriage and saw straight through her. But probably in this method of concentration on one figure and one definite crisis, Miss Delafield was wise. Certainly she has given as complete and un sentimental an analysis of a single character as we have read in a long time.

All modern novels deal more and more with psychological analysis. Sometimes, as in the case of D. H. Lawrence and perhaps Evelyn Scott, to speak of a lesser light, frank use is made of the lessons of psycho-analysis and the novel becomes pathological. Miss Delafield, however, does nothing so evident. She gives the appearance of telling you a simple story. But little by little, quietly, with no fuss or comment she builds up so complete a revelation that you find yourself actually inside another mind, Lydia's, for instance, without knowing how you got there. Hers might be called the painless method of analysis. For in her calm style there are none of the emotional excrescences that mark the work of less controlled writers, although she has all the feeling they have and probes as deep, in her own way, as anyone.

This appears to us a more finished work than *Tension* and less morbid than the earlier *Consequences*, and seems to prove that we may always look for fresh achievements from Miss Delafield.

Irish Troubles Humanized

"AN ENTHUSIAST," by E. O'E. Somerville. (Longmans, Green and Co.)

NOW that there appears to be a ray of hope on the Irish horizon it may be easier for many of us to enjoy *An Enthusiast*. For while affairs were still painfully critical, the book might have struck too near home for some of us, might have filled others of us with wrath, and still others with a black despair. E. O'E. Somerville has chosen to write impartially, but from the understanding view of a dweller in the land itself of the Irish *impasse*. To be sure, the book is a novel, but its chief preoccupation of its author is the

Irish-English problem. Of her impartiality she says in the preface,

"There is something arrogant, if not offensive, in an attitude of impartiality, and to be strictly impartial is to be equally disliked by all sides. In trying to keep an even keel in very stormy seas I have risked this disaster. The people in this story all view Ireland from different angles, and each speaks for him or herself, and not for me. On one point only are we agreed—in love for the country that bore us, that ardent country in which the cold virtue of Impartiality is practically unknown."

Daniel Palliser, the enthusiast, is like the author in that he stands neither for the crown nor for Sein Fein, but for Ireland. He believes that her salvation lies in prosperity and education. To that end he farms his land in the most modern manner, urges co-operative societies and the like, and works hard, if futilely, at his post on the district council. He is the son of a landowner and hence has English connections, but a child of the land so that he knows the people. "We've had enough of fighting," he says. "We've got to speed the plow." But since he affiliates himself with neither party, but has friends in each he is naturally looked on with suspicion. He is a young, naive, eager soul, put upon by his mother and a horde of relatives, liked by the beautiful Lady Ducarrig with whom he falls in love, hated, of course, by her husband, and not astute enough to protect himself from the consequences of his own straightforwardness. Of course, he loses in the end. It looks as if Miss Somerville must have described very truly the tense, tragic atmosphere of even the more peaceful sections of Ireland and the reactions of the various kinds of Irish

A BOOKBUYER'S LIST

"BURNING SANDS," by Arthur Weigall. (Dodd, Mead & Co.)

The African desert is the background of this romance of a scientist and a beautiful and very haughty lady.

"THE FLAMING FOREST," by James Oliver Curwood. (Cosmopolitan Book Corporation). \$2.

The third of this author's trilogy of the Three Rivers Country. As mysterious and thrilling as "The Valley of Silent Men."

"PEEPS AT MANY LANDS," four volumes. (The Macmillan Co.)

Descriptions of China, Japan, Norway, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, Italy and Greece. Illustrated in color.

"TIRED RADICALS," by Walter Weyl. (B. W. Huebsch, Inc.) \$2.

A posthumous collection of essays of a former editor of the *New Republic*.

"BRASS," a novel of marriage, by Charles G. Norris. (E. P. Dutton & Co.)

A dispassionate study of the institution of marriage. The scene of the novel is California.

"REAL LIFE," by Henry Kitchell Webster. (Bobbs-Merrill Co.) \$2.

The lively romance of the youngest, loveliest and richest of screen stars.

men and women to it. The book is not propaganda, but rather description. And it is also a very human story. There are charming bits of atmosphere and of the Irish talk as well as clever characterizations, but we must say we miss the rare humor that marked, for instance, "In Mr. Knox's Country." Naturally on such a subject and in such a time the author could scarcely be expected to use that earlier note of levity, but much as we respect this very sincere, real piece of work, we cannot help hoping that when peace does finally settle upon her troubled land, Miss Somerville may be able to give us more of those chuckles which burst forth from every page of her collaborations with "Martin Ross."

Dawes Book Is "Damnless."

"A JOURNAL OF THE GREAT WAR," by Charles G. Dawes. 2 Vols. (Houghton Mifflin Co.)

GEN. DAWES, who recently brought himself to public attention by swearing at a Congressional committee and was later appointed Director of the Budget, used his hearty methods in the army. He says that, breathing fire and brimstone, he made his uncursions into the military system after results, "my mind fixed upon the redhot poker of dire necessity pressed against the lower part of my back and oblivious to nicety of expression or convention forms of military salutation."

But, probably through his friendship with Pershing, Dawes got by the old-line officers unscathed. Indeed, early in the game, according to the book, a number of regular generals "got ready to hand him something, but after looking him over once decided not to do it."

Gen. Pershing had occasion once or twice to reprove his old friend for disregard of military etiquette, and once sent his Chief of Staff across the road to make Dawes "police up," button his overcoat.

The volumes, however, display hardly a damn. There is plenty of Dawesian writing in them, but no profanity. The books consist of a personal journal, supplemented with letters and other papers, and several reports. The journal begins as he arrives in St. Nazaire and ends as he sails for home two years later.

Gen. Dawes was general purchasing agent for the A. E. F., American member of the military board of allied supply, and military member of the United States Liquidation Commission. As an appendix to Vol. I is given his report to Pershing on his work with the allied supply board. Vol. II contains his daily and final reports as general purchasing agent, made to the commanding general of the services of supply, A. E. F.

Dawes wishes, he says, to point out to military students the necessity of a unified control of the rear similar to that established in the world war with Marshal Foch in supreme command of the fighting forces. Foch was able to use these weapons only as their supply systems permitted. Dawes early recommended such unification of the rear and at length succeeded in having the military board of allied supply created for this purpose. This board helped to coordinate and avoid duplication, although there was no supreme command of the various services. It came to general agreements which the allies followed.

On account of the distance of the A. E. F. from its base the shortage of bottoms and the general inability of American industry to furnish what was needed a large proportion of American supplies was bought overseas. This purchasing Dawes superintended as general purchasing agent, and his functions were very important.

Dawes got his original commission as major through Pershing and S. M. Felton, then director general of railways. He was assigned to the Seventeenth Engineers (railway) and went overseas as lieutenant-colonel of that outfit. At St. Nazaire he was detached and sent to Paris, where he stayed at the Ritz, worked very hard and occasionally gave dinners and attended the theater. His journal he kept in the office of Morgan-Harjes Company, bankers, where it could be locked up.

Dawes was in frequent consultation with his "good friend John" Pershing, and with Maj. Gens. Francis J. Kernan and James G. Harbord, who successively commanded the services of supply. In addition to his duties as director of purchasing he was given the task of obtaining the civilian labor needed by the A. E. F.

There are a number of incidents in the book which will interest the general reader. Those who took part in the events Dawes describes—and there are many in Washington—will get a lot out of the personalities and negotiations depicted in it. Dawes is unstinting in his praise of Pershing, and hands bouquets to a large number of his associates. Some representatives of the diplomatic service disgusted him through their lack of force, but he doesn't mention them by name.

One Dawesian incident occurred early in 1919 when his "auxiliary advisory committee" joined in a roundrobin attack on "our department of army service." Dawes promptly dissolved the committee.

In 1917, when Dawes wanted to borrow a ship from Admiral Sims and get some coal to France, Sims, according to the book, "started on a strong complaint that the situation needed someone to handle it who knew it, that it was being handled piecemeal, and that this-and-that was the way to do it."

"What I came for," he continues, "was to borrow a ship not to get a statement of what I knew to be the fact up to the time I took hold of the coal matter about a week ago. I got (apparently only) angry and proceeded to give him a good imitation of a man who knew what he was talking about, descending, I regret to say, to extreme statement. Immediately the gold lace dropped away and a clear-headed, helpful man emerged—one who could not give us a ship for he did not have one to give, but one who gave helpful suggestions and kindly encouragement. I realized then that Sims was a big man, and what he had said at first was to find out whether I was, or not, in the shortest possible time."

HOLWORTHY HALL has so many names and does so many different things that he is in a fair way to be regarded as an institution rather than as an individual. Under this name he is, of course, widely known for his stories and novels. Under his real name, Harold E. Porter, he was a major in the air service. He is the author of a book, "Aerial Observations." As Robert Middlemass he has acquired something of a reputation as an actor in the role of the sergeant in "Buddies." Under this alias he is also something of a playwright.