

New Fiction

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too clearly defined, which enables her to know just what every one she needs to know about is doing or thinking at any given moment. She inspires mysterious telephone calls and notes pinned to pillows in hotel chambers. And other women do her will, leading poor blundering Philip on from danger to danger. He is, however, one of the unshaken kind. Nothing causes him to lose his head or blench.

As for the love parts, they are pleasantly thick. Philip follows one woman to the jaws of death and tells any number of lies for her because he thinks he loves, though it's hard to be sure of that sort of thing, especially, as is the case with Philip, when you were bitterly disillusioned in your teens and have since fore-sworn the company of women and devoted yourself to money and its getting singleheartedly. And then, all in a twink, he falls in love with woman number two, and continues to pursue the path of danger for her sake. Both women are married, so to speak. One to an English gentleman who has become a detective and who is tracking her for her crimes against humanity and especially his own country, the other to a Russian who has dedicated his own life to the furthering of the cause of humanity, and who spends his time trying to get killed. One wishes him all luck in the endeavor, but he seems foolishly inept, and gradually one loses faith. His wife is a wife in name only, since he feels that any conduct of his in the least degree approximating normality would be utterly unfair to the world at large. Affairs are further complicated by the fact that Santa, the first woman, loves this reluctant husband of Anna's, or so Anna says. Santa keeps on asserting that it is Philip she loves, and we never discover which of the two is right. But since Anna says that to be loved by Santa is "like witnessing the signature to one's death warrant" it may be as well for Philip that the matter is left in doubt.

Philip, it may be said, has come to Europe in order to sell bread to the starving nations in return for "concessions" which will make him dictator. Ambition is his fatal rider. When, however, under the guidance of Santa, the murderess, he finally reaches Vienna and sees people starving he loses the dictator urge and even the deeper instinct to make a good business deal, and he proceeds to give his bread away. Santa says, in passionate adoration, "It was god-like of you." He will "build a wall of bread" which will stop the inflowing hordes bent on getting food at any price, even that of immolation. And we are given to understand that there will be no wars where there is a "wall of bread." Any war could have been stopped by that barricade if only the attacked had been wise enough to use it. One wonders how this fact came to be overlooked when the Germans over-ran Belgium!

If Mr. Dawson means his book to be taken merely as a new Ouldesque form of pastime, a rigmarole of impossible adventures and what may be termed highfaluting language, well and good. But there are hints ever and again that he wishes to be taken seriously as a writer who has something to say to us worth listening to, and even as an artist. In this book he is neither the cue nor the other. He has always been subject to sentimentalism, but heretofore he has shown tokens of a desire to reflect upon, if not to interpret, life. A book like "The Vanishing Point" removes him from serious consideration as a novelist. It removes him all the more decidedly because of the fact that he appears to think he has done something worth doing. If the story were a frank appeal for popularity flung out with an amused grin it would not matter much. It is the dreadful seriousness of the thing that is appalling. He is, in this "vanishing point," purporting to study the fanatic in his various phases, personal or political. The idealist is he who thinks he can join possibility with desire, and who attempts to put this notion into practice without regard to results. That is Mr. Dawson's theme, and a perfectly legitimate one. But the book he has written to embody the theme is merely an evidence of it to a most unhappy extent. It is ridiculous as a portrayal of human beings, its diction is spoiled by an itch for fine writing, it arrives at no conclusions and makes no attempt to prove its

assertions. Except for the fact that Mr. Dawson once showed promise and that he possesses several of the qualifications of a writer and might develop others with time and work the book would not call for comment.

HILDEGARDE HAWTHORNE.

GOLDIE GREEN. By Samuel Merwin. Bobbs-Merrill Company.

SAMUEL MERWIN in "Goldie Green" has told the story of a different kind of a flapper. If Marigold Green had been born into a different environment (say the F. Scott Fitzgerald environment) she would undoubtedly have sized up men and life (and hooch and cigarettes) just as she does in Mr. Merwin's novel, and used all three no less judiciously, if not so much to her actual advantage. Marigold Green was born into a family that included a whining mother, a mild, uncomplaining but unquestionable failure of a father; a humorless brother determined to "protect" her, a younger brother just as much of a problem, and the twins. Hence she learned her first lesson of life and men in her teens, not at proms and the-dansants but vending tickets in the booth of the Parthenon-Picture Palace in Sunbury, a suburb of Chicago.

How she used the knowledge acquired there to advance herself, salamander like, from the ticket booth to an insurance agency in a big hotel lobby and thence to the managership of, first, the Parthenon; then a second movie theater, and, finally, a whole circuit of them, is entertainingly told in the Merwin novel. Incidentally, Goldie in her upward climb carries the other members of her family with her, providing them with an automobile, installing them in a new and more pretentious home, obtaining a permanent if not over-lucrative post for her father and almost humanizing the serious brother. Goldie has a vocabulary all her own, no illusions regarding men and an insatiable thirst for battle. This last keeps the story moving swiftly from start to finish, for Goldie encounters enough obstacles to discourage any one but the peppy, short skirted—conspicuous, if you will—example of American youth that she is.

The tale is not given over entirely, however, to commercial battles and ambitions. There is love interest, too—a pleasing bit. And it is characteristic of the energetic Goldie that, after steering through a world in which scores of designing men prowled at large, a world echoing daily with what she would have—in her first Parthenon days, anyway—termed "wise cracks," Miss Green elects to marry not the original source of the capital which brought her the managership of the Parthenon but the dreaming artist, the youth who first made her realize that the great lobby of the Beach Hotel that she had so long stood in awe of was not splendid but vulgar; the youth who told her of beauty—real beauty. She marries, running true to form, not the equally desirable suitor on whom she can depend for the rest of her life but the dreamer who is so dependent on her, whom she must carry along with her other battles and burdens.

Goldie knows where she wants to go, but she isn't going to be scorched getting there. She makes this plain early in the story when, triumphantly holding up a contract for the insurance agency just won after a motor drive with the dispenser of such documents, she adds to the comment of her father that it seems to be properly signed:

"And witnessed! Trust Little Eva on any ice there is!"

The characters in Mr. Merwin's novel are finely drawn. The heroine keeps the book sparkling and the story is altogether satisfying and entertaining, with never a bit of "dragging." Goldie is one of a type easily recognizable, even though it must be admitted that the author deals her out success in a measure larger than that which usually goes to her type.

HURRICANE WILLIAMS. By Gordon Young. Indianapolis. Bobbs-Merrill Company.

EVEN though, in these days of parodies and satires, there appears to be a growing incredulity toward tales of the Southern Seas "Hurricane Williams" may be listed as a decidedly good piece of work. It is a story that is engrossing and at times highly pleasing, for its touches of color and scent, to one who inevitably finds

himself using "Conrad" as a measuring stick for this particular type of writing.

The very exotic qualities that are now called into question gave stories of this region a considerable vogue for many years—ever since Stevenson and Melville began offering them. It is perhaps a somewhat natural reaction to fall into a vein of cynicism and to suspect that some recent writers are capitalizing the preternatural desire to reach out, mentally at least, to new lands after the bitter disillusionment as to our civilized life that has been deeply accentuated by the war. And so one sometimes wonders whether men really do fight and kill quite so casually and almost dispassionately as they appear to do in Pacific fiction. Perhaps after all it's as well to give the author the benefit of the doubt, to assume that a different law of probability holds down there. Remembering that most of these men of the sea and veterans of Botany Bay are what Freudians would call "extraverted," that they live almost wholly on the physical plane with nothing to do with their minds on long voyages, it is at least a bit easier to be lenient.

In the present history there is certainly enough violence to give vicarious satisfaction to the most thwarted victim of civilization. A trail of blood runs from chapter to chapter. The death roll is appalling, even for the south seas. Pistols, knives, cutlasses, belaying pins, axes, fists, drowning come into play. One feels that the author rather overdoes it, for even life and death duels and mutinies lose much of their interest when they become almost commonplace. Whatever may be the actuality of life on the southern edge of the world, out of consideration for the normal skepticism of the Northerner the bloodshed might be held in some kind of check.

Hurricane Williams is not the central figure, but rather a pirati-

cal phantom that flits in and out of the tale. The interest is focused more upon McGuire, a hobo of the sea, formerly with Williams, whom Gorrvalsen, a scholarly and brutal Dane, picks up at Honolulu on his way to the south in search of a treasure which a Finnish survivor has told him that Williams's ship, wrecked on an uncharted reef, contains. With Gorrvalsen are his wife, a niece, a nephew and an adopted daughter with a penchant for flirting—a dangerous proclivity in the circumstances. The niece, a naive and immature girl, makes a deep impression on McGuire, and the parallel advancement of his feeling and the mutinous and lustful rage of the drunken crew make up the central motif. Its development is even and inevitable, though the element of sheer chance that enters at one point would be held by some as too much of a *deus ex machina* for the best effect.

There are paragraphs of poetic quality and the craftsmanship is sure and direct throughout. The episode of the swimmer's battle with a shark while the others shout advice from the ship's rail is more telling than all the human butchery in the book.

FREE RANGE LANNING. By George Owen Baxter. New York: Chelsea House.

IT is a pleasure to welcome a wild West story that has real novelty, freshness in its handling, a touch of the true romance, and subtlety in its conception. The tale runs true to form so far as the necessary gun play, exciting adventure, rapid movement, encounters with very naughty outlaws, &c. is concerned, though it is never extravagant or inflated. But its real value lies in the author's conception of his young hero, who is a man as well as a hero. And the true heroine of the book is not the girl in the case but the hero's mare, Sally. Finally, the story ends with

a clever variety of the "Lady or the Tiger" puzzle—one is left in doubt as to which Andy is really going to choose, the horse or the girl, and room is left for the hope that he may eventually keep both.

Andy comes of a race of men who have always been a "wild crew." He is trained up to be a gun fighter by his uncle, who is something of a retired wild man. But Andy hasn't really the making of a thoroughly bad man in him. As the marshal diagnoses his case at the climax:

"What's a desperado in the real sense? A man who won't submit to law. . . . But because he won't submit he usually runs foul of other men. He kills one. . . . Finally he gets the blood lust. Well, Andy, that's what you never got. You killed one man—he brought it on himself. . . . But look back over the rest of your career. . . . You're a desperado—a free man—but you're not a man killer. . . . Well, the thing for you to do is to get where men don't wear guns."

Andy when put to the test naturally shows fight and thinks he has killed his man. Thereafter he sees his "first girl" and the usual complications ensue. He thinks the girl has thrown him over, so he turns toward outlawry, but he is never really a criminal. The presentation of his character and its gradual development is a skillfully worked out affair, logical and wholly sound. It never impedes the movement of the story, but it is all there.

The thread of the love story that serves to hold the plot together is strong enough for that purpose, but is not over accentuated. It is daintily handled, a delicate strand touched in almost a gingerly manner, but real enough. That too is quite unusual in a story of this type; unusual enough to call for special commendation, as it is entirely successful. As often happens, the publisher's

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"You can be a little bit in love and a little bit sick, but you can't be a little bit married or a little bit dead."

—Love, Roses and Romance

—and every month will be June to you—to HER! if you—if SHE! but read, recall and play the plot of life prompted by BEAUTY AND NICK.

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BEAUTY AND NICK

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