

The Whispering Gallery

In Which We Observe Booth Tarkington's Unconcern Regarding the Flapper, and Are Informed That the True South Seldom Gets Into Print,

By DONALD ADAMS.

READERS of Booth Tarkington's "Gentle Julia" (Doubleday Page) must be struck, we think, by its seeming unawareness of any difference between this younger generation and the last. Alone among those who watch the feet of the young men, and the girls, and the paths they take, Mr. Tarkington is unconcerned with the tendencies which others find to be dreadful and alarming.

Gentle Julia flirts through all her waking hours, but she bears no likeness to the flapper, and her mischievous niece, Florence, gives no indication, even at thirteen going on fourteen, of developing into one of that species.

Of course, there is nothing in Mr. Tarkington's story to indicate unmistakably that the young persons with whom he is concerned were born within the twentieth century. There are, on the other hand, some little anachronisms which point back to an older civilization.

We discovered somewhere in the course of the story a group of youngsters playing a game called "Truth." We remember the game very well. It was very simple. You ask questions of one another—very personal questions—and everybody is in honor bound to give no false testimony. This innocent pastime was frequently indulged on shady porches fifteen or twenty years ago, but we have doubts of its survival, even in the middle Western towns of which Mr. Tarkington writes.

The parties which Mr. Tarkington describes, the parties at which Gentle Julia strews destruction to her right and left, have no similitude with those we find written about elsewhere. They are the sort of parties we remember ourselves, and we are by no means as ancient as Mr. Tarkington.

Perhaps he chooses to ignore those characteristics of modern youth which have called down the wrath of the elders, on the supposition that they really do not mean anything, and have no bearing on the eternal complexion of youth, with which he is concerned.

As a matter of fact we don't care very much whether Mr. Tarkington bothers himself with these details or not. There are very few of those who give sedulous attention to a Belascoian correctness in their stories who approach the humanity of his touch and the gentle satire which he attains.

"Gentle Julia" is not the book of serious implications which "Alice Adams" was, but it is genuinely amusing. . . . It escaped our

mind when we were speaking of Mr. Tarkington's anachronisms, but we meant to say that in their attitude toward one another these boys and girls of his do not have that matter of fact manner which is supposed to be characteristic of the new generation. Noble Dill, in love at twenty-two with Julia, is astonishingly naive. We wonder what Scott Fitzgerald will think of him.

The Fictional South.

IN connection with T. S. Stribling's "Birthright" we were asked if we were acquainted with the work of Octave Thanet (Alice French), whose "By Inheritance" was called to our attention as somewhat parallel with Stribling's book. We do not know her work and were interested in a letter from Martha McCulloch-Williams in which she says that "paradoxically, the very best and the most veritable delineations of Southern life have come from two women, New Englanders by descent, yet knowing fully the things set forth. They are Constance Fenimore Woolson and Alice French—otherwise Octave Thanet. Both have done their best in short stories—their novels, though more than respectable, do not touch the briefer form."

Mrs. McCulloch-Williams, it may be noted, is herself a Tennessean, as is Mr. Stribling. "Please tell me," she writes, "why it is that any book dealing with matters Southern falls flat unless it harps on the note of cross breeding? Cable found fame and fortune by rather insisting that every Southern white man habitually overstepped the color line, and by critiques Shands, Stribling et al. strike much the same note. Take my word for it, young sir, there is so much more to Southern life than the parti-colored aspect that it is a thousand pities folk North will not believe it, and if you paint the parti-colored stuff veritably you get no hearing from the powers that be in publishing."

"I think the obscuration you mention of Octave Thanet's books is probably due to the fact that she spoke truth instead of falsities the critics thought due anything Southern. I am far from denying race admixture—it is a saddening fact, but one that has been sedulously distorted for ends political and otherwise. I am old enough to remember slave conditions—lived through the civil war in a debatable land, was cradled in slave arms, had for sole playmate the black girl given me at birth to grow up into my maid, and after the war, when my father was 80, ran the plantation for ten years, employing two to fifty black men and women every working day. So I claim not without reason first hand

knowledge of the black race—it has every virtue save two—thrift and chastity."

Mrs. McCulloch-Williams recommends a collection of short stories by Miss French under the title of "The Missionary Sheriff."

The Laureate Again.

CAN it be that when we spoke last week about the American laureate we gave the impression that we not only thought Edgar A. Guest and Walt Mason would lead any popular contest for the decision, but that we were also of the opinion that their success would be deserved? Apparently Reuben B. Oldfield believes that we are, for he writes us that "like yourself I cannot agree with Mr. Hooker and am entirely out of patience with the brainless riming of to-day—the disjointed cubist jazz that makes a secret of having no secret at all."

Our only quarrel with Mr. Hooker was in his apparent assumption that if a popular election of the laureate were held the leading candidates would be Edwin Arlington Robinson, Amy Lowell and Edgar Lee Masters. These names, we believe, are as good as any others among contemporary American poets, though we have doubts about Masters and Miss Lowell, but we contend that if the electorate were not hand picked, not limited to, let us say, such persons as can give you offhand the names of six contemporary English poets, there wouldn't be a look in for Mr. Hooker's three while Edgar A. and Walt were in the running.

Mr. Oldfield, we take it, finds Mr. Hooker's candidates guilty of "brainless rhyming." We do think there is a great deal of poetry being written that "makes a secret of having no secret at all," but we do not consider Messrs. Robinson and Masters and Miss Lowell as arch offenders. Mr. Masters has written some of the worst blank verse that has ever reached the printed page, and Miss Lowell sometimes makes verbal cross quilts; Mr. Robinson has spells of out-Browning Browning, but all three have added measurably to the living body of American poetry.

Dadaison.

AT their worst they are incapable of the complete inanity of the puzzle picture poets who proceed on the theory that



DELIVERING THE GOODS.

(April 21, 1922)

one mess of words is as good as another. There was an article in the *Bookman* last month by Albert Schinz in which he offered the opinion that the Dadaists were pushing to the extreme the craving for novelty and originality in the hope that absurdity carried to the last degree might result in a recovery of its senses by the artistic world.

Certainly after reading two specimens of Dadaist poetry selected by Mr. Schinz one must believe either that the movement has such an intention or that its sponsors are morons. Here is a piece by Lor's Aragon, called "Suicide":

A b c d e f
g h i k l
m n o p q r
s t u v w
x y z

We offer also "Paroxysme," by Pierre Shapka-Bonniere:

— — — — — O
! ! ! tsi — — — I
— et sam — et sam — sam — a M
— et sam — et sam — sam — a M.

? oha — Keink — — tsi H
! rroor — O
— atakak x — af — oh — tzi g.

The Dadaists, says Mr. Schinz, "organized various picture exhibitions, and also meeting in order to read their work 'en patois Dada' to the accompaniment of a frenzied jazz band. The most famous of their pictures is one by Marcel Duchamp. He took a print of the Mona Lisa, put a Kaiser mustache under her smile and exhibited it. Another artist spilled some ink on a large sheet of paper and called it the *Virgin Mary*."

AS for our own preferences in the choice of a laureate, if he were really intended to be the pre-eminent figure in contemporary American poetry, we confess to indecision. There is, to our mind, no one outstanding figure. If we were permitted to take into account the possibility of future development we would be strongly inclined toward Vachel Lindsay.

Lloyd George and London Punch

LYOYD GEORGE. By Mr. Punch. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

AT times the *Punch* joke is not merely perplexing to the American mind; it is a positive atrocity. Often the *Punch* cartoon is based upon problems so purely insular that it is quite meaningless to even the widely traveled and widely read American. Yet no one thinks of denying that when *Punch* publishes a great cartoon it is great beyond the boundaries of the British Isles.

There have been *Punch* cartoons in the past that stand out in the annals of caricature like the great dates of history. Tenniel's "The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger," which was published August 22, 1857, sent a thrill throughout the civilized world. Suggested to Tenniel by Shirley Brooks, it summed up all the horrors and thirst for revenge that animated England when the news came of the treacherous atrocities of the Sepoy rebels. Comparable to that cartoon for point and vigor was John Leech's "General Fevrier Turned Traitor." At the beginning of the Crimean war the Czar had boasted that whatever forces France and England might send Russia possessed two generals on whom she could always rely, General January and General February. Toward the end of the winter Nicholas I. himself died of pulmonary apoplexy after an attack of influenza. In a flash Leech seized upon the idea. *General Fevrier had turned traitor.* It caused a shudder to run through all England. Tenniel's memorable "Dropping the Pilot" was published March 29, 1890, after Wilhelm II. had decided to dispense with the services of Bismarck.

In the twentieth century cartoons in which *Punch* has chronicled the activities of Lloyd George (the first drawing of the little Welsh attorney to appear in the *Boulevard* street publication bears the date of De-

ember 12, 1900) there is comparatively little of the highly dramatic. Curiously enough, the four years of the world's most ghastly war are reflected in only a few pictures. Conspicuous among these is the one, entitled "Delivering the Goods," here presented, for which the inspiration may have been drawn from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story "A Straggler of '15," which in dramatic version, with the title of "Waterloo," was played by Sir Henry Irving and later by the American actor W. H. Thompson.

A pleasant feature of this series of cartoons is the amiable spirit which *Punch* shows in its treatment of England's closest allies, the republic to the east and the republic to the west. That indicates a change of heart from the old days. *Punch's* hostility to Louis Napoleon in the fifties was the direct cause of Thackeray's resignation from the staff. Whatever the ideas of Mr. Wells on the subject of French imperialism

may now be the *Punch* of these cartoons is in warmest sympathy with the *entente cordiale*. It is much the same with the American attitude of *Punch*. Among the earliest *Punch* cartoons were "The Land of Liberty," showing a shifty looking Brother Jonathan, one foot on an overturned bust of Washington, considering with complacent approval a score of bloody atrocities; and "What! You young Yankee Doodle! Strike your own Father!" in which the unamiable figure representing America is squaring off at John Bull. Then, at the time of the Spanish-American war, was the *Punch* picture showing Dame Europa and Uncle Sam. Dame Europa, frigid of aspect, asks icily: "To whom do I owe the honor of this intrusion?" "Marm, my name is Uncle Sam." "Any relation of the late Colonel Monroe?" is the scathing retort. Very much more kindly is the aspect of the Uncle Sam of "His Friend the Enemy."

Coal and Its Mining

THE FOUR HOUR DAY IN COAL. By Hugh Archbald. The H. W. Wilson Company.

M R. Archbald is a mining engineer. His book, with an introduction by the Bureau of Industrial Research, presents graphically and mathematically the conditions of present coal mining operation that make the average working day of the miner approximately four hours. Figures compiled by the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics are quoted to show that more than half the coal miners in America work only from 50 to 75 per cent. of the full eight hour day, that only 2 per cent. work full time, that 77 per cent. work less than three-fourths of full time.

The cause, as Mr. Archbald sees it, is the faulty organization of work.

Direction of operations by foremen is slipshod; the foreman never knows precisely how many men are at work. . . . He is not in touch with his men the whole day. The foreman, who is a semi-skilled, unscientific employee, is required to fill two somewhat inconsistent functions—that of supervision and that of engineering—without being adequately qualified for either. In consequence the work of the miner is necessarily inefficient—the work days in the year and the working hours in the day are intermittent. The author points out that this loose method has characterized mining for a century, and concludes that until the coal mines are efficiently operated the grievances of the workers will continue and the price of coal to the public will be higher than it ought to be.



HIS FRIEND THE ENEMY.

Uncle Sam (to Mr. Lloyd George). "Say, your man Northcliffe is some Press-agent; he's made all our folk crazy to welcome you at Washington." (August 5, 1914)