

New Fiction

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tion gives the prospect of a happier future for the family living in the old castle.

The background of Provence is described with affectionate enthusiasm. And indeed the customs, the folk songs, the stories, as well as the warm hearted happy nature of the people dwelling in that lovely bit of country seem most appealing.

It is a book that can be safely recommended for even the old fashioned type of young girl in her teens. For her more particularly, as the more up to date person of those tender years may find it a bit too simple and romantic.

WHISPERING SAGE. By Harry Sinclair Drago and Joseph Noel. The Century Company.

COLLABORATION is apparently becoming more and more fashionable nowadays, and in this case the result is pleasing. Mr. Drago, we are told, has lived much in Nevada and speaks from first hand knowledge of his Basque sheep herders who figure largely in the story. They are not entirely a novelty, but are portrayed here with more detail and probably with better understanding than in their previous incidental appearances in fiction. The story itself is of the familiar Western type: a row over water rights, the big rancher's encroachments, politics, and, of course, plenty of intrigue and lots of gun play. The girl Mercedes and her necessary lover, Blaze Kildare, are rather better than the usual run of such performers. The plot is skillfully developed along usual lines, but with a very good manner.

The authors also have somewhat more than the ordinary feeling for landscape, but it is not unduly intruded and never allowed to get in the way of the orderly movement of the tale. But the most interesting element in the book remains the study of the Basque settlers—a peculiar people, who have always managed to maintain their individuality wherever they settle, and who remain distinct even in an American environment, just as they have remained unassimilated in their original mountain homes of the Pyrenees, with Spanish on one side and French on the other. It appears to be a racial persistence that is paralleled only by the Jew. This story demonstrates that they are good material for fiction.

PLAYING WITH SULS. By the Countess de Chambrun. Charles Scribner's Sons.

ALONG about page 165 this tale, which treats with the problem of the future of children of divorced parents, becomes interesting and moves along at the pace that is called for by the plot. It drags woefully in the early parts and if a reader is not faithful and persistent (or driven to it!) he is likely to miss a mighty good story by casting the volume from him ere he has come to the part after which the tale can safely be counted upon to hold him.

Matthew Dale is a retired financier who has granted his frivolous young wife a divorce. Matthew, Jr., is taken abroad by his mother (under the terms of the agreement) when he is three years old. He is educated in Paris and does not meet his father again until he has become of age. Even then the father does not reveal his true identity for some time, during the course of which he tries to divert his son from the smooth path of cabarets and racing and one Mile. Bricotte. The boy grows to be fond of the old fellow whom he knows only as one Myron Kester.

There is romance and an effective love story, with the father playing an unusual role. The tale, however, is somewhat hampered by affected dialogue and the overfondness of the author for using quotation marks around the most commonplace of phrases and expressions.

TREMENDOUS ADVENTURES. By Dion Clayton Calthrop. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

THIS is at least not a commonplace, conventional story; it is not wholly successful, but it has a flavor of its own and a genuine charm, especially in its earlier chapters. It opens with a pleasantly sentimental, poetical study of "the enchantment of Mr. Frogmore," an elderly merchant who is outwardly hard, dry and stern, but inwardly a dreamer, consumed by his memory of a brief love affair of forty years ago. There are fine touches in this. Then the story moves on to the romance of Henry and Rose, who inherit

some of Mr. Frogmore's wealth and start out to live very happily, in idyllic surroundings. But then enters the real hero villain of the piece, Pindar Willoughby, who arrives by way of the sea, being saved from a wreck. He is an engaging rascal, with a fatally troublesome penchant for the opposite sex. He proceeds to make trouble for Rose and Henry, but is eventually subjected to "enchantment" himself and spirited away, leaving the road clear for the lived-happily-ever-after. It is very well done as to detail, and there are tense dramatic moments as well as much fine description and sentiment, but the various ingredients do not always mix smoothly and the narrative is uneven in its flow. But the story has a real aroma of originality.

LETTERS TO A DJINN. By Grace Zaring Stone. The Century Company.

IT is a pleasure to recommend this book to discerning readers. It is a delectable combination of humorous observation, of seriocomic romance, with occasional bits of tragedy, alluring in manner and full of solid matter. The form of it is also unusual nowadays, as it is told in the shape of a series of letters written by a young American girl, a sort of feminine knight errant, to a confidant in New York, whom she considers her good Djinn, ready with advice at crises. It recounts the girl's experiences in a long trip about the Pacific, from Australia to Singapore, touching at many points—Tahiti, Ceylon, Java and less familiar corners. The wanderer is sent on a mission of rescue; she is to bring a sick woman home to Australia from Singapore. The thing develops into a series of adventures, grave and gay, and ends in a properly natural love story. Mrs. Stone is writing from actual knowledge of the places and people she describes, and her way of treating them is highly individual. Her people stand out clearly and naturally, drawn by an understanding artist, and her backgrounds are equally good. She has caught much of the glamour of the South Seas, but she also shows the darker sides of that enchanted land, with admirable balance. It is a fine piece of work.

SOUTH OF THE LINE. By Ralph Stock. Doubleday, Page & Co.

THE inexhaustible South Seas yield a rich harvest to Mr. Stock in the score of short stories that make up this collection. The best of them are those that deal with the native way of looking at things and people, especially as shown in the experiences and observations of the youthful maiden, Felist of Luana, who made the queer white folks an object of study. Mr. Stock is skillful in the short story form, which he uses in a conventional enough fashion, but always with an individual quality of his own that lifts them out of the commonplace. The dominant note in most of the tales is a mild humor, with an occasional touch of pathos. But he can also indulge in extravaganzas, as in the case of the abduction of the wealthy young Mr. Sterling, who was held to ransom by the desperate traders.

He does not overindulge in description, but the atmosphere of the thing is good. That is the way the islands ought to be, and one is willing to admit the probable accuracy of his account. If it has not the glamour of a Stevenson it is free from the overheated rhetoric that wails so many of the flowery rhapsodies upon the coral and palm and mermaid infested islands.

THE GREEN GODDESS. By Louise Jordan Miln. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

THE process of novelizing a play is only a shade less dangerous than the reverse procedure of building a play upon a novel, in spite of the fact that so large a portion of current fiction is dominantly dramatic. This book is based on the popular play by William Archer, but Mrs. Miln has made the theme her own and has widened and enriched it to no small success. The plot, of course, remains theatrical, but it is not thinly so: the situation of the wandering English trio, the girl, her husband and her lover, about to be sacrificed to the Green Goddess of the mysterious Asiatic land, with the sufficiently startling escape.

Mrs. Miln has a fine feeling for the glamour and mystery of the Asiatic, the intricacies of the alien mind, and its impact upon the intruding Occidentals. It is familiar enough material, but she handles it with distinction. It is, naturally, some-

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