

New Fiction

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worthy one. He even acquires a serio-comic servant when he leaves the mysterious inn, a seryant who is as wise as Sancho Panza and even more efficient, especially with his ever present and ever useful frying pan. And there is an innkeeper who is like a spider, silently descending to the nocturnal murder of his guests.

It is, of course, partially an allegory; of the gradual sapping of civilization by war and predatory lusts, with the valiant crusader tilting against the forces of evil. The wicked innkeeper, from his spider's den of an inn, built against the majestic walls of the old castle, has been quietly penetrating and undermining the old fabric—but the allegory is not overworked. It may be read as a fairy tale of adventure, an exquisite prose-poem for the imaginative reader. The first part of it is a masterpiece that can almost stand alone.

THE DAY AFTER DARK. By Emerson Gifford Taylor. Small, Maynard & Co.

TO carry off a fantasia that falls somewhere between a Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera plot and Stevenson's "Prince Otto" calls for no small skill, and Mr. Taylor is not always entirely successful, but he has done very well indeed with it. There are many scenes that might be safely called Gilbertian in their mixture of modern wit and humor and entire plausibility in a quite impossible situation.

It is staged in a half fairy kingdom and dated at any indefinite moment of more or less modern romance that you please. The heroine jumps into the story out of a yellow post chaise after a day's sea voyage, having started from London, and she is equipped with the modernly sounding name of Eugenie Louise Buchanan. She runs off into an enchanted wood and there meets the prince in disguise—a prince who has "gone on strike" and demands his Saturdays off. From that point onward it is a sequence of happy, serious and farcical adventure, running through many of the old fairy story plots up to the unmasking of the prince and ultimate happiness. It ranges in tone from the fiction of Hewlett's medieval romance to up to date slang and "a return to normalcy," as one character puts it, but neither vocabulary is overworked and they blend nicely.

DOUBTING CASTLE. By Ellnor Chipp. Boni & Liveright.

AS this is a first novel and the author presumably young one is not surprised to find it a somber, unrelieved tragedy, a product often characteristic of the visions of earnest youth. It has dramatic quality and the women are, for the most part, well done. So, too, the old men and the mildly malicious gossiping family life of a middle class clan. The hero of the piece, Richard, is not quite so satisfying, but he is fairly well understood. "He had been a good man, a dutiful son, a loving husband, upright and courageous in all his dealings with his fellowmen. Yet God had cursed him with love of two women." One of them was his wife of some twenty years' standing in that capacity when the intrusive young lady captured him. He still loves his wife, but Gloria represents youth, and it occurs to him that monogamy is an imperfect institution. There is no open scandal, but a great deal of strain, until finally he outgrows his infatuation for the unhappy girl. The trouble is that she still loves him, desperately, and she makes a nuisance of herself, even rendering him ridiculous. She solves the puzzle by dying. One is sorry for him, and ought to be more sorry for her, but the tragic conclusion is not sufficiently inevitable to make it wholly convincing. The author's style is good and her management of the minor characters is particularly successful.

RICHARD. By Marguerite Bryant. Duffield & Co.

THIS is a problem story of a type more fashionable a few years ago than to-day, but still always more or less in style. It is well done, though, as often happens in such work, the chief characters are rather more walking problems than all round men. A tough case of con-

science confronts the old Judge, Mr. Justice Garven, when he recognizes his scapegrace son in an escaped convict. He knows that duty compels him to give up the young man—he should call in Scotland Yard at once—but he is also convinced that long imprisonment will not reform him but, on the other hand, will complete his damnation. So he makes a compromise, which involves a sort of half voluntary imprisonment for Richard, who is interned in an old country house with a jailer, but rated as a "paying guest." Enter the daughter of the owner of the house, of course without knowledge that Richard is a criminal. The result that might be expected follows, and true love completes the young man's salvation and reformation.

Richard himself is very well done; the type of young man who is not so much vicious or predatory as adventurous. He regards crime, including thievery and swindling, as a great game. In fact, even when he is awakened by his love for Joan it does not appear that he has discovered any real moral obliquity in theft—only it does not pay, and he must be good to get the girl. But Richard does play the game fairly, as a good sport. The girl, too, is humanly interesting. The two elderly fathers are more conventional figures, but they will do well enough.

1943. By Mr. X. Philadelphia: Dorrance.

THIS is a seriously meant tract for the times, as well as a suggestive story. The narrator, Gordon, is put to sleep by a Hindu hypnotizer in 1923 and told to stay asleep for twenty years. Then the hypnotist is accidentally killed, and no one else can awaken the sleeper until his time is up. His friends preserve him carefully and he wakes on time, in 1943. But the American world has not been sleeping all that time, and Gordon finds it most monstrously changed. It has all gone very "blue," as the Reformers have reformed everything. Prohibition was merely a beginning; ultra Puritanism has come in under a dictator, a German who ran things absolutely for some years until he was assassinated. Since then things have been drifting from bad to worse.

Gordon, reawakened, becomes a leader of revolt and ultimately wins the country back to sanity. It gives the author a chance to show just how vicious, absurd, deadening and corrupting a stringent application of prohibitory, ascetic ideas can be. The natural result is hypocrisy, hidden immorality and corruption of all sorts. It is fairly well done, but the theme is rather too big for the anonymous author. Nevertheless it holds the interest, and its argument is vigorous.

CAPTAINS OF SOUL. By Edgar Wallace. Small, Maynard & Co.

"QUITE an interesting evening," remarks the incidental Sir John Maxton after a dinner party at which the leading freaks of this mystery story had been performing. The reader will agree with that; among other things Sir John had heard how the wonderful Ambrose Sault was able to change identities with other people, under some circumstances. It was this unique ability that made the real, all wool, yard wide mystery of the story. But Ambrose had also invented a safe to hold the "documents"—a safe that was really proof against meddlers. Of course there are blackmailers, stock gamblers, injured young women and other mysterious things, but the wonderful Ambrose, who is a mulatto, an ex-convict from Noumea, a giant in strength and a lot of other things, too, is the *piece de resistance*. He is truly extraordinary enough to arouse interest. The book has some originality in invention.

THE SECOND FLOWERING. By Samuel Gordon. The Macaulay Company.

THE second, or substitute, heroine of this novel, who is an authoress, admits that she wrote a "story to grip people by the heart." That is what this is meant to do—to be "gripping." It grips fairly well for the audience that likes to be gripped. It is another Enoch Arden case. When Hillary Balcombe realizes that Vanessa married him only to displease her lover, one Grandcourt, he decided to go right away, although he finds it hard to leave his infant daughter. He is properly assumed to be dead and Vanessa gets her Grandcourt, who however, is a "detrimental." In due time Hillary comes back, disguised, and finds it necessary to inter-

vene, in curious manner, in his daughter's behalf. The plot is cleverly built, and after the suitably tragic end of Vanessa the returned ex-husband consoles himself with her sister, who enjoys the striking name of Aasa.

IN JEOPARDY. By Van Tassel Sutphen. Harper and Brothers.

SOMETHING of novelty appears in this mystery story in that the narrative covers over sixty years—a "continued-in-our-next" mystery. The first corpse in the case was slaughtered in 1861; others followed at short intervals until 1865, and then the Terror had to wait fifty-three years before it got another. The story itself is somewhat too long drawn out, like the murder, but it is an ingeniously elaborated plot with plenty of very good mysteriousness in it. The stage scenery is unusually sumptuous, especially in the furnishings and architecture of the splendid old Colonial house in Maryland, with its library and wonderful stained glass windows. It also has a scientist, who was half a century ahead of his time in his discoveries in physics, but who kept their practical application to his own murderous uses. Fortunately, the world at large has not yet quite caught up with his discoveries. Mr. Sutphen must have spent an appalling amount of time and energy in working out the complex cipher which figures largely in unraveling the mystery, but the reader may take its accuracy for granted.

THE CAT'S PAW. By Naitale Sumner Lincoln. D. Appleton & Co.

LIGHT, ingenious, with all the parts of the jigsaw puzzle fitting in mechanical perfection at the end, "The Cat's Paw" is a good mystery tale of the second order. Here, against a background of Washington at the end of the war, is a swiftly moving plot which begins with the murder by poison of Miss Susan Baird, an unamiable spinster, in her Georgetown house. According to the accepted conventions for the making of a story of this kind, suspicion is constantly shifting from one character of the narrative to another, with the real culprit at once conspicuous before the reader and yet in the shadow. There is a rush of episode, revolver shots, intriguing encounters in the dark, and from chapter to chapter there is emphasis upon Mouchette, the dead woman's seven toed Angora cat, which holds the key to the heart of the mystery and from which the tale takes its title.

THE FIGHTING EDGE. By William MacLeod Raine. Houghton Mifflin Company.

ONE knows pretty well what to expect when Mr. Raine assembles a "ragged Cinderella of the desert" with "dark eyes, passionate and resentful at what fate had made of her young life"; a red haired hero, a blackmailing scoundrel, a hermit and numerous accessory characters in a suitable far Western location. The expectation is not disappointed. Things happen. Bob, the red haired, is at first a diffident person, but grows in efficiency and emerges as a full size he-man in the final closeup. He marries the Cinderella, who is but fifteen when the story opens, but she is kidnapped with extreme expedition on the wedding day, and naturally that made a mess of things. It aroused Bob and others to violent action. There are robbers and Indians and large and small riots too numerous to catalogue. Mr. Raine is a master of this popular form of moving fiction, with style and manner above the average. His local color is brilliant, but he writes from actual knowledge of the wide stretch of country he covers—New Mexico, Texas, Arizona and "the beyond" in general. This is an excellent specimen of his work.

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