

## New Fiction

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fuses to conform. It is, in part, the normal revolt of youth plus a very strenuous personality. Naturally, when two such people are thrown together the sparks are sure to fly. Each is a peculiarly complex individual, but they manage to harmonize for a while, though the man is condemned to a very painful end. The most unusually attractive thing about the book is that Miss Mander is able to work over this very dangerous, highly inflammable material without making either of the extraordinary protagonists at all absurd. Although Dane is a typically romantic figure, definitely haloed, he is not too bizarre to be credible. Neither is Valerie merely another young woman who has kicked over the traces and stuck her thumb to her nose in the face of the conventions. One believes in her.

There is also a soundly attractive quality about the stage setting of the book. New Zealand has not yet been written to death, and its opportunities must be enormous, for all who have been there agree that it is one of the world's most beautiful corners. Miss Mander has a fine knack of description; her landscape is never unduly intruded, but it is luxuriantly there, an integral part of the whole picture.

**BIG LAUREL.** By Frederick Orin Bartlett. Houghton Mifflin Company.

**T**HIS is a small but dramatic story that loses itself in being forced to fill over three hundred pages. A tale of what should be swift dramatic movement—the cave man love of Bud Childers for the mountain girl, Roxie Kester, his quite natural attempts to kill the man she loves and the final amicable settlement of everything—it had possibilities. But the reader doesn't want to be bothered with long disquisitions on the feelings of the various characters nor to linger too much on the beauties of the landscape. If only Mr. Bartlett would let them act it out. But, no! Whenever they begin he drags them back with a heavy hand and takes the stage center himself. He cannot trust them; they might forget to say something subtle. And the reader who has become interested and wants to know what is next—well, the reader skips. One hopes that next time Mr. Bartlett may take his MSS. into the silences and ask himself sternly: "Could I, by mercilessly pruning everything but dialogue and action, make a short story of this?" The result might be a remarkably good even a memorable short story instead of a publisher's size novel, which is only one of the rank and file.

**THE CATHEDRAL.** By Hugh Walpole. George H. Doran Company.

**I**T may be that this novel will appeal to fewer American readers than some of Mr. Walpole's preceding work, but, assuredly, he has done nothing so fine as this before. One is tempted to the use of architectural terms in describing it, for it has something of the magnificence and imposing weight of a cathedral; massive but tremendously living. Perhaps even better is the simile of pageantry; Mr. Walpole treats his story as a pageant and one lays it down with the feeling of having taken part in some vast play. The dominant thing is the great Cathedral itself, not merely as a symbol of the old religion but also as something of a deity in itself, a Moloch, it may be, but overpowering. In one splendid passage we read: "Individuality was lost. The Cathedral, thinking nothing of Kings and Queens, of history, of movement forward and retrograde, but only of itself and of the life that it had been given, that it now claimed for its own, with haughty confidence assumed its Power . . . the Power of its own Immortality that is neither man's nor God's."

This singularly effective personification of the Cathedral itself is unique in modern literature; one must go back to medieval artists to find any parallel. Yet Mr. Walpole is distinctly not a medievalist, and the book itself, though concerned primarily with the very definite era of the Jubilee Summer of 1897, is also a forward looking book. It records, sometimes concretely, sometimes with delicate allegory, the passing of an age, but it is not unaware of the future.

"We know that it is simply the stepping

from one stage to another of the eternal, the immortal cycle. . . . The Cathedral, the Monks, the Baron's castle, the feudal rule; then the mighty Bishops and the vast all encircling power of the Church; then the new merchant age, the Elizabethan salt of adventure; then the cozy seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with their . . . comfortable religion. . . . Throughout the nineteenth century that spirit lingers, gently repulsing the outside world, reproving new doctrine. . . ."

But that came to an end with the Victorian era, which he marks, specifically, at 1897 and the Boer war. It is quite impossible, however, to give any adequate analysis in a brief notice.

The human story, against this back-



Frederick O. Bartlett, Author of "Big Laurel."

ground, is also impressive; often a tense, dramatic affair. A very long, complex plot, engineered with superb skill. It holds a very large number of carefully drawn people, and can hardly be said to have any single dominating hero, though the central figure is the Archdeacon, Adam Brandon, who has become a sort of dictator in the Cathedral world, and who stands for the old order. The climax of the book is his downfall before a newer spirit, but this new order is, to some extent, itself a malevolent thing. Space limits forbid any outline of the plot. In some cases Mr. Walpole's desire to stress his theme leads him to bend his characters a little at the

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—The Baker & Taylor Company's Monthly Book Bulletin.

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