

J. St. Loe Strachey

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upon the problems of British imperialism. A notable episode, in the chapter on "The Ethics of Journalism," is his clash with Cecil Rhodes, when in the exercise of his "watchdog function in journalism" he had to do "a good deal of barking" against Mr. Rhodes's policy of the open checkbook. To Americans probably the most interesting single chapter in the book is "My American Tea Parties," in which he narrates his organization of a weekly meeting of the American correspondents in London, soon after the opening of the world war, for the purpose of putting them in touch successively with the highest British officials from the Prime Minister down, so that they would be able to cable to their chiefs that they had heard from headquarters the general outline of the situation, even though they were not at liberty to publish what had been told them in confidence. Incidentally, these tea parties, begun along the hard track of duty, turned out to be a "primrose path of pleasure." Mr. Strachey had expected to deal with a body of severe strangers, and he found himself with "a band of brothers—men to whom you could intrust your secrets in the spirit in which you intrust a bank with your money."

At best, however, in reviewing this book one can only skim the surface, touch upon a few of the high lights, mirror back a stray ray or two of its opaline diversity of color. Although its author has spent a lifetime fighting political battles and helping to mold the form of British imperialism, and although this volume contains perhaps the best argument ever put forth in defense of a constitutional monarchy like England's as against a republic like our own—nevertheless, this autobiography is essentially that of a man of letters, and its enduring value lies in the thousand and one little *obiter dicta*, luminous flashes of critical judgment on all manner and grades of makers both of prose and of verse. Impressionistic criticism it essentially is—than which no other kind is better or more helpful, when the writer has that rare combination of wide sympathy, fine artistic perception and a mind richly stored with the best traditions of the world of letters.

New Fiction

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a blanket and carrying him off in her canoe, bound and gagged. It is a pleasing reversal of the usual happening, especially as the hero is a real, red blooded he-man and puts up a good fight. But she is always too much for him, right up to the final clinch. And, oddly enough, she is not at all a burlesque, bizarre as the conception is. The story as a whole has a great deal more real humanness than most of its type. There is also an ironic humor in it that gives it a tang.

THE MYSTERIOUS OFFICE. By Jeannette Lee. Charles Scribner's Sons.

IN these increasingly feminist times it is of course right and fitting that the business of super-sleuthing should be taken over by the ladies. Mrs. Lee's amiable sleuthness (the word needs coining), Miss Millicent Newberry, is probably but the leader of a new procession of Lady Sherlocks. She is very welcome, and the emphatically ladylike mystery is a pleasant novelty. Mrs. Lee does it entertainingly. It keeps one interested, and her style, in this, is happily free from affectation, being smooth, simple, and very readable. The plot is a slender affair, but it suffices. A dignified elderly business man absentmindedly leaves \$25,000 in bills on his desk while he goes out for a while, and when he returns the money is gone. The four confidential employees in the outer office all had access to the private room, but Mr. Geary cannot believe any of them guilty. Yet the money is gone. It necessitates a contest in ultranobility, in which each suspected person confesses to shield some one else. It is all upon a tremendously elevated, ethereal plane, and there really isn't any villain after all. Miss Newberry's detecting consists chiefly in knitting and in the application of a philosophy of uplift and cheerfulness; there is nothing sordid about the thing anywhere—a pleasantly perfumed mystery. And it does keep you guessing, which is the main end of such a tale.

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