

Best Candidates for Your Shelf

AS MUCH PAGE OF THE SUNDAY CALL CONDUCTED BY UNA IN COOL

"A Girl of the Limberlost"

By Gene Stratton-Porter, author of "Freckles," etc. Published by Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.

It is difficult to speak of the work of Gene Stratton-Porter and not call upon all the superlatives of praise in the language. Everything she does is of such excellence that the reviews of her books must all read very much alike. And yet her books are seldom or never in the lists of "best sellers"; and when her tales are analyzed it will be seen that it is a sad comment upon the taste of the reading public.

While this book is not a sequel to "Freckles," we find him as one of the lesser characters of this story, and several other old friends appear in its pages. This tale is the history of Elнора Comstock, a girl of the Limberlost, from childhood to young womanhood.

Elнора has lived all her life in the Limberlost, a virgin forest, containing a terrible swamp. Her father had been drowned in the quicksands of this swamp on the very day she was born, and the horror when she was born it had ruined Mrs. Comstock's life and at times it almost seems her reason is affected.

Elнора is introduced to the reader in the opening line and we learn that she is starting for her first day of high school in Onabasha, three miles away. She has received what training she has at "Brushwood school," No. 8, and like most country pupils, does excellent work. The school work is nothing to Elнора; she is determined to learn everything, and stored away in the back of her brain is an ambition to go to college when high school is finished. Her mother will give her no help and Elнора does not know until she is in the classroom that she must buy her own books and also pay the small tuition which all out of town pupils must. Added to this shock is another which is just as keen; she finds that she is dressed like a gawk and the silly, thoughtless school girls and boys smile at her in a way which hurts more than a blow.

It requires several chapters to get Elнора started on a comfortable career through school and during this time we meet Wesley and Margaret Stinton, who are almost angels. The important part, however, explains how Elнора saw a sign.

"Wanted—Caterpillars, cocoons, chrysalises, butterflies, moths; Indian relics of all kinds. Highest scale of prices paid in cash."

Now, Elнора had had much experience with "Freckles" in gathering

moths and had learned how to take them and care for them and knew, too, something of the value of the various varieties. "Freckles" had given her what he had when he went away, so Elнора inquires who it is wanting the caterpillars, and when she finds it is the well known "birdwoman" she goes at once to her. The birdwoman buys her collection orders many more, and Elнора is supplied with money for clothes and books and even sees her college career in the distance.

Entirely aside from the nature study, the story itself as a story is charming. It is filled with pathos, humor and no "problem" comes to disturb the reader's entire enjoyment. But the nature study is the big thing, and the reader must read it to be convinced that even the disinterested will be converted after a few chapters. So artistic is the author's work that not for one second is the reader bored by details about the moths, and at the end of the book it will be a complete surprise to find how much real information has been acquired between the lines of this charming story.

Not the least interesting portion of the book deals with the awakening of Mrs. Comstock, and every reader will close the book loving this embittered and long suffering woman. The love story is delightful and arouses one's sympathy and interest from the start.

The story is clean and sweet throughout as the beautiful woods and nature with which it has so much to do. It is an unflinching sort of story and interesting alike to young and old. It can not be too highly praised.

Since the dry nature faking was first heard in the land, there has been at least one naturalist whose work has stood the test almost without question—Ernest Thompson Seton.

He is not only a thorough naturalist and careful student, but a charming writer as well, and a lover of all forms of genuine outdoor life. He lives at Cos Cob, Conn., on one of the most interesting places in this country, which is the realization of a dream conceived in the early days of poverty and obscurity. Mr. Seton tells "The Story of Wyndygoul" in Country Life in America, in a fascinating style, and the first of the two installments, which appears in August, is illustrated with some of Arthur G. Eldredge's extraordinary color photographs.

A casual glance at the title "Confessions of a Con Man" makes the reader familiar with the work of the versatile brothers Irwin when it is seen to be signed "Will" instead of "Wallace."

A bit of reading, however, soon shows that no mistake has been made. The book is filled with amusing anecdotes, but sadly amusing—pathetically humorous. These confessions first appeared serially and Mr. Irwin says in his preface that friends and admirers alike thought, of course, they were taken there; otherwise I have sunk down only what he told me, trying through it all to give some flavor of the man and his vocabulary. . . . Few writers of today would have had the courage to do what Mr. Irwin has done in this little book; he has sunk his own identity so far out of sight that nothing remains to tell the reader that he had anything to do with the writing of it; and yet who else could have told these tales so graphically—or rather who else could have drawn such confessions from any man?

The book is divided into five chapters, entitled, "I learn to cheat with marked cards," "I join the circus and slope with Minnie, the elephant," "I become an eminent fixer and an adept at big joints," "I rejuvenate three-card monte," and "Why I cut it out."

For the purposes of review one quotation will be enough. In the third chapter—"I become a fixer"—he is explaining some easy ways to skin the farmers who go to the circus and to fair. One is worth hearing about, or a lot of people will be glad to get the real meaning of "23" at last.

"Cloth is an easy money dice game. The operator has before him a sheet of green felt marked off into figured squares—3 to 48. The player throws eight dice, and the dealer compares the sum of the spots he has thrown with the numbers on the cloth. Certain spaces are marked for prizes, five or six are marked 'conditional' and on number 23, is marked 'lose.' The dealer keeps his stack of coins over the 23 space, so that it isn't noticed until the time to show it. These spaces marked 'conditional' are used in a great many gambling games, such as spindles; they are the most useful thing in the world for leading the sucker on; for when he throws 'conditional' the dealer tells him that he is in great luck. He has thrown better than a winning number, and he is only to double his bet and on the next throw he will get four times the indicated prize, or if he throws a blank number, the equivalent of his money. He is kept throwing 'conditionals' until his whole pile is down, and then made to throw 23—the space which he failed to notice and which is marked 'lose.'"

The slang expression comes from this game. The player has a chance on earth for the tables are filled with "boosters" and other confederates of the dealer, who simply count him out.

There have been other expositors of card tricks and various cheating devices to catch the green and the unwary, but for some reason they have failed to accomplish their object and the "con" man goes cheerfully on his way vigorously plying his trade. This will amuse the wily city man and will interest and instruct the unscrupulous. It is carefully written and illustrated with a few clever sketches by W. Glackens.

His wanderings have influenced his work as an universal as human nature and free from the restrictions of locality. His New York stories are generally conceded to be his best, and to show the most level degree of excellence; but the reason for this lies in the stories themselves.

"People say I know New York well," O. Henry said to me. "Just change Twenty-third street in one of my New York stories to Main street, rub out the Flatiron building and put in the town

hall. Then the story will fit just as truly elsewhere. At least, I hope this is the case with what I write. So long as your story is true to life, the mere change of local color will set it in the east, west, south, or north. The characters in the 'Arabian Nights' parade up and down Broadway at midday, or Main street in Dallas, Tex."

His work commands the highest prices editors pay, and editors pay for breadth and depth of appeal. The reason that O. Henry gives them the cubic area they want. It is almost a fixed idea of publishers that volumes of short stories are bad risks; but a collection in book form of stories by O. Henry finds a waiting crowd. The crowd is large, like his titles—"The Four Million," "The Voice of the City," and "The Trimmed Lamp"—are the names of New York city. "The Gentle Grafter," naturally enough, has no home.

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"Stories of Greece and Rome"

Retold from St. Nicholas. Published by the Century Company, New York. Price 65 cents.

About five years ago the first book of stories retold from St. Nicholas was issued for supplementary reading in the schools. It was a book of animal stories and so great a success did it become that each year has brought a new series of books contributed from the same source. Historical stories, geographical stories, stories of adventure, travel and description. Now a fourth series is offered, entitled, "Historical Stories," all of them from the old world and the middle ages. This series is divided into six books, the one body and leads to the soul.

It is a common temptation to compare their recent arrival in literature with its veterans or its gods. O. Henry's indifference to the English language as he makes it do his bidding is like the indifference of Kipling. A likeness to Dickens is more obvious. There is the largeness of philosophy and sympathy, the gleam and flash of wit, humor grotesque and deep, and the half intimate savor of his writing. He is not really gay and not really intimate.

His stories make a sort of "Comedie Humaine." He takes "rag time" music and gives an effect that challenges the grand opera. "Life," he says himself, "is made up of sobs, sniffling and smiles, with sniffling predominating." The shop girl who masquerades for a week as a great lady, the flat dweller who has a glimpse of heaven through the skylight of her attic bedroom and of romance in an ambulance, the tawdry little actress whose faith is shattered, the young clubman who chooses between a fortune for himself and one for a homeless girl, are all people of his, portrayed with a quick, loving pencil, vigorous, apparently careless, in reality painstaking to the point of fineness. He has, too, an elusive way of interweaving the romantic and the ridiculous so that they are hard to distinguish. Take, for instance, a passage from a short story entitled "Hearts and Crosses":

"Santa was lying in bed pretty sick. But she gives out a kind of smile, and her hand and mine looks horns, and I sit down by the bed and spurs and chaps and all. 'I've heard you ridin' across the grass for hours, Webb, she says. 'I was sure you'd come. You saw the sign?' she whispers. 'The minute I hit camp,' says I. 'Twas marked on the bag of potatoes and onions.' They're always together in life.' 'They go well together, I says, 'in a stew.' 'I mean hearts and crosses,' says Santa. 'Our sign—to love and to suffer—that's what they mean.'"

O. Henry's methods of work, as he himself describes them, are simple. "Rule 1 of story writing is to write stories that please yourself. There is no rule 2. In writing, forget the publisher. I get a story thoroughly in mind before I sit down at my table. Then I write it out quickly, and without revising it, send it to my publishers. In this way I am able to judge my work for the most as the public judges. I've seen stories in type that I didn't at first blush recognize as my own."

"Do you have times when you can't write?" I asked him. "Oh, yes; sometimes I have dry spells that last for two or three months. In this event, I never force myself. I get out and see things and talk to people."

He is now at work on a novel which will surely find, when it appears, an eager and curious crowd who will want to read the first long work of the man whose short stories have made him such a big, clear, lovable figure.

Then follow six other talks upon "His Intimates," "Books," "Money," "Recreation," "Wife," and "Church"—each discussed with a genial wit and intimate knowledge of the subject. We believe that any reader who turns first to the opening pages of the chapter on "His Wife" will not only read that at one sitting, but will be impelled to follow the author through the whole volume with the utmost care. For he is emphatically a man who has something to say.

Hall Caine has just finished his novel "The White Prophet," upon which he has been at work for three years. He is accustomed to start his literary labors at 10 o'clock, and he has not from that hour until 11 o'clock. This particular book he has written through three times. It is a novel of about 200,000 words. The first four books of it have been ready for months, the last book having been just completed. To his publishers he writes, "It is longer than I expected. I think it is the most arresting and dramatic thing I have done. . . . I have done all I can to write, and the future must be on the knees of the gods."

At the age of 15 Jacques Futrelle, the author, held the typewriting championship of the United States. It is to say, he could write more words to the minute than any other person in the country. Curiously enough, Mr. Futrelle has entirely discarded the typewriter in the composition of his stories. He writes his novels, as he writes out in long hand, corrected, worked over and written out in long hand a second time.

Further information regarding Mrs. R. S. Garnett, the author of "The Infamous John Friend," a romance of Napoleon's projected invasion of England, lately reviewed in these columns, is given here. Mrs. Garnett is a member of a literary family, being a descendant of William Roscoe, the historian of the Medici, and a niece of R. H. Hutton, late editor of the Spectator. Her husband, however, is a psychologist in the French service, is a psychological study of a masculine type new to fiction.

One of the most interesting announcements for the fall is an important book of travel, the most serious since Stanley's "Darkest Africa." It is entitled "The Great Wall of China" and is written by Dr. William Edgar Geil, the eminent American traveler.

Charles Rann Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy (Edith Wynne Mattheson) have been making a round of visits among friends in various sections of the country since the finish of the spring tour of "The Servant in the House." They are at present in Maine.

Roy Norton is at present engaged on a new novel, which is described as being of a sociological order. To gather the material for it he is traveling from one city to another, living in different grades of society and investigating whatever he sees that carries with it promise of human interest.

To the long list of literary friendships of romantic outcome should be added the marriage on June 16 of Miss Katherine MacHarg of Chicago, sister of the writer, William B. MacHarg, and her betrothed friend, Edwin Balmer. These Chicagoans are coauthors of a series of "new" detective stories now appearing in one of the magazines. Mr. Balmer wrote the play "Via Wireless" and the novel

"Waylaid by Wireless," both remarkable successes of the present season. Messrs. Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. have now in press a novel by a new southern writer, Frances Nimmo Greene. It is entitled "Into the Night" and is a tale of mystery laid in old New Orleans. The author is a native of the city and highly, Miss Cable writes: "The author knows her New Orleans, and her characters are very lively."

Hamlin Garland is at his summer home, Mapleshade, in West Salem, Wis., where, despite his announced resolution not to write any more novels—only plays—he is said to be now and again occupied with a page of fiction.

John Kendrick Bangs, whose latest book, published by the Harpers a few months ago, introduced that friendly character, "The Genial Idiot," is established for the summer at Cape Neddick, Me., where his cottage is one of the most admired along the Maine coast.

John Spargo, author of "The Bitter Cry of the Children," "The Spiritual Significance of Socialism," etc., is spending the summer with his family at his summer home in Bennington, Vt. He has just completed and sent to his publishers the biography of Karl Marx, which he began 12 years ago. The biography will be published in several languages.

Dorothy Canfield, the author of many short stories and daughter of Flavia A. C. Canfield, who wrote "The Kidnapped Campers," returned recently from a sojourn in France and is again at her home in Arlington, Vt., where much of her literary work is done.

Carolyn Wells, whose latest "book for adults," as some one called it to separate it from the author's various stories for children, is the "Rubbishy of Bridge," is a temporary dweller in the White mountains. Miss Wells is at Mount Washington, where she intends to pass the remainder of the summer.

Later advices from England would seem to indicate that William de Morgan's new novel, "It Never Can Happen Again," which had been announced for this month, may not appear till September, possibly later, as Mr. de Morgan, who is one of the most conscientious of workmen, is still at work upon it.

Dr. Henry C. McCook, author of "Nature's Craftsmen," who has been spending some time in Philadelphia, has returned to his country home, Brookcamp, near Devon, Pa. Brookcamp, with its stretches of green and mighty trees, its stream and varied growths of plant life, is an ideal spot for the distinguished naturalist, who pursues there his intimate studies of insect life.

Van Tassel Sutphen, one of the best known of New York short story writers and author of several novels, among them "The Doomsman" and "The Gates of Chance," sailed a few days ago for a sojourn of several months abroad, chiefly in Italy. Mr. Sutphen is as well known to sportsmen as he is to bookmen, being a celebrated golf player, formerly editor of Golf and writer of several stories of the links, which are collected under the title of "The Golfside."

John Macy, author of the life of Edgar Allan Poe in the Beacon biographies, is now living at Brunswick, Me., having retired from his work as associate editor of the Youth's Companion. Mr. Macy recently wrote to the papers in the name of his wife, who was formerly Miss Sullivan, teacher for many years of Miss Helen Keller, denying the statement that the late Henry H. Rogers was responsible for having rescued Miss Keller some 25 years ago. Mr. Macy shows that, as a matter of fact, Mr. Rogers was first taken to see Miss Keller in 1896 by Mark Twain, his benefactions beginning soon thereafter.

"The Calling of Dan Matthews"

By Harold Bell Wright, author of "The Shepherd of the Hills," etc. Published by The Book Supply Company, Chicago.

Harold Bell Wright has done a fine piece of work for the Ozarks and few writers will care to encroach upon this his chosen field. This is his third novel of the same district and many of the same people whom the fortunate readers of the other two know so well appear or are mentioned in this book.

Dan Matthews is the son of Young Matt Sammy, whose love story was told in "The Shepherd of the Hills," and with such parentage is sure to be a noble man. We meet him first as a young lad out fishing and every movement of his career is followed with keenest sympathy and deepest interest.

Dan feels called to the ministry and goes away to a theological school. His first charge is in a middle class town called Cornish in a middle western state. The Memorial church has had some difficulty in being suited with a minister; they have in the last eight years had as many different men and something was always wrong:

"There was Rev. Swanson who was too old; and Rev. Wilson—it was his daughter; and Rev. Jones—it was his wife; and Rev. George—it was his son; and it was Rev. Kern—who did not get on with the young people; and Rev. Holmes—who was too young, and got on with the young people too well. . . ."

Dan knew nothing of this at first and went at his duties with all the enthusiasm of a young man. He was made of this book only an earnest young minister's troubles with a bigoted, narrow, and dishonest church, and a thoroughly bad lot of "elders." All the while the young man was being tempted by poverty and suffering.

Through the influence, first of a kindly and, oh, so human, old doctor, who has evolved most of his own philosophy during long fishing expeditions; and second, the study of a poor lame boy whose sweetness of disposition had not been tainted by poverty and suffering, Dan begins to doubt the entire satisfying and comforting qualities of his chosen religion. Not the religion as it is, but as it is ordinarily practiced in Christian churches. This is brought home to him very forcibly by his experience with a poor young woman of the town. Years before the young woman's father had shot a man; soon after he had been hanged for the crime and the girl was left alone. How she lived it is hard to see. Having tried everything without success she had sunk lower and lower. People would not know her because she had stain on her father's name and finally they began to speak of her as "that Grace Connor," imputing to her every

"Strong people, Dan, sometimes manage to live in mighty sickly climates. The best people in the world are sometimes held by evil circumstances which their own best intentions have created. The people in the church are of the same sort. The system of our saintly goodness the system would have rotted long ago. The church, for all its talk, doesn't save people; the people save the church. And let me tell you, Dan, the very ones in the church who have done the things you have seen are not at heart respect and believe in you. . . ."

It is their religion to worship an institution, not a god; to serve a system, not a race. In history, my boy, the persecution begins with the persecution of the reformer and ends with the followers of that reformer persecuting those who would lead them another step toward freedom. Misguided religious people have always crucified their saviors and always will!"

One might quote at length from the old doctor's homely philosophy. The book can not be read without the keenest interest. It is a story of a man of that old time, real flesh and blood characters, so human are they all.

"The Young Man's Affairs"

By Charles Reynolds Brown, author of "The Social Message of Modern Pulpit," etc. Published by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., New York.

Good common sense and a grasp of the essentials are manifested in every page of "The Young Man's Affairs." Having been a young man himself—perhaps counting himself as still one—the author does not attempt either sermonizing or lecturing. Instead, he here gives a series of the friendliest talks on the things which concern a young man; on affairs which every young man is called upon to decide for himself. You can steer a ship that is moving "His Main Purpose." "You will agree with me," says the speaker, "that no man is apt to arrive unless he has a fairly distinct idea of where he is going. You can steer a ship that is moving. . . . and you can do almost anything with a young man who is possessed by a purpose. If that purpose is a mistaken one, he can be faced about. But it is hard to do anything with human delinquents."

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BOOKS REVIEWED

- "The Calling of Dan Matthews," by Harold Bell Wright
- "A Girl of the Limberlost," by Gene Stratton-Porter
- "The Confession of a Con Man," as told by Will Irwin
- "Stories of Greece and Rome," Retold from St. Nicholas
- "The Young Man's Affairs," by Charles Reynolds Brown

O. HENRY—THE STORY OF THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

By Peyton Steger

FOR the last six or seven years O. Henry has been, perhaps, the most popular short story writer in America. He has a large audience who look to him most of all for a satisfactory and entertaining interpretation of the life of "The Four Million," a title of his own that expresses his aloofness from a sympathy with the "four hundred."

Sydney Porter, which happens to be the baptismal name of O. Henry, is a flat dweller in Manhattan. The reasonable desire of Mr. Porter to share none of O. Henry's fame has been, however, largely unavailing. When a man's work deeply interests people, and there are no facts at hand to illumine his personal bizness and trivialities, rumors come from the world of fiction. So it is that a career of O. Henry has been pieced together out of magnified bits of gossip, told and retold by the friends of a friend. The legend runs that he has been tramp, tinsmith, and even penniless in a New York prospector in hard luck, cowboy, artist, druggist.

These bits of romantic gossip have been misleading to the public. O. Henry has wandered while here, for ever lands and across seas, but his aim has never wandered. He has always been a writer, and has toiled hard to write well.

He has not had, however, the hardships often incidental to an author's life. He has never written a story which he has not eventually sold. To be sure, there was a time when he got only \$50 for a story—as he says "no better, really, than the ones for which I get 20 times as much now."

Although what the man has done is far more important than where he has been, it is well worth while here, for a general purpose of recording a few personal facts that are true, to give an outline of his life. He was born in 1862, in Greensboro, N. C. When still a youth he went to Texas, and spent nearly three years on the ranch of Hall, the ranger. At this time he was already planning to write. To further this plan he secured a position with the Post, a daily newspaper of Houston, Tex. After a year there he went to Austin, and for \$250 purchased Brann's Iconoclast from the owner. Brann went to Waco, Tex., and a few months later asked O. Henry to give him back the title, for he wished to re-establish his paper. O. Henry's spirit has never been iconoclastic, and he blithely consented, rechristening his own paper, the Rolling Stone. The new iconoclast, at once achieved a considerable distinction for brilliancy, until Brann was killed a few years ago in a street duel. The Rolling Stone, written and illustrated almost entirely by O. Henry, has a life of its own. When this venture he went to Central America with a friend who intended to become interested in the fruit business, but didn't. "Most of my time there," says O. Henry, "I knocked around among the refugees and consuls." From Central America he returned to Texas, where two expedient weeks of employment in a drug store were enough to keep alive for 20 years of his occupation as a druggist. Thence he went to New Orleans, where he began not more earnestly, but with more consistency of effort, his work as a writer. Eight years ago he came to New York.

"When you take up a pen name?" I asked.

"I was in New Orleans one day I said to a friend, 'I'm going to send out some stories. I don't know



whether they are any good or not, so I want an alias. Help me pick one.' He suggested we get a newspaper and pick a name from the first list of notables we found. In the description of a fashionable ball, my eye lighted on the name Henry. 'That'll do for a last name,' said I. 'Now for a first name. I want something short.' 'Why not a plain initial?' asked my friend. 'Good!' I replied, 'and the easiest of all to make is O.'

His wanderings have influenced his work as an universal as human nature and free from the restrictions of locality. His New York stories are generally conceded to be his best, and to show the most level degree of excellence; but the reason for this lies in the stories themselves.

"People say I know New York well," O. Henry said to me. "Just change Twenty-third street in one of my New York stories to Main street, rub out the Flatiron building and put in the town hall. Then the story will fit just as truly elsewhere. At least, I hope this is the case with what I write. So long as your story is true to life, the mere change of local color will set it in the east, west, south, or north. The characters in the 'Arabian Nights' parade up and down Broadway at midday, or Main street in Dallas, Tex."

His work commands the highest prices editors pay, and editors pay for breadth and depth of appeal. The reason that O. Henry gives them the cubic area they want. It is almost a fixed idea of publishers that volumes of short stories are bad risks; but a collection in book form of stories by O. Henry finds a waiting crowd. The crowd is large, like his titles—"The Four Million," "The Voice of the City," and "The Trimmed Lamp"—are the names of New York city. "The Gentle Grafter," naturally enough, has no home.

But this influence of place is insignificant. The qualities that mark his work as an universal as human nature and free from the restrictions of locality. His New York stories are generally conceded to be his best, and to show the most level degree of excellence; but the reason for this lies in the stories themselves.

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