

their garb, spoke their speech, lived their lives and died their deaths — and died, at last, his own. Read the story of his bearing aid to the shepherd king of Parnassus, shot by bandits and hence not to be approached by these men of Greece. Read the story of the outcast dog he fed and taught to count, whose illness was later to be the cause of his own death. Not even is there lacking to the possible legend a St. Francis of Assisi touch — read the story of the wild bird of Kyrios Kouk which, tamed one summer, returned the next, and that fall refused to migrate with its kind; which, lost for three months, came back to snowbound Delphi and beat against the windows of the house where Kyrios Kouk lay dying.

Only two years in Greece, all of the time among its simplest people, and yet when he died, all Greece honored him. The villagers of Delphi and the shepherds of Parnassus first, who buried him as one of their own children. And then the Athenians and all the rest of Greece, who, through their government, honored him as no one has been honored since the old Greek temples began to fall. Above his grave at Delphi lies a great stone from the Temple of Apollo, forever engraved, while stone shall last, in Greek and in good American, with his name and fame and time and place.

Why was he a "failure" in his own land? Almost any page of this unique biography will answer that. Here, for instance, taken at random from page 42, is a notebook entry made beside the Mississippi, before he was twenty years old:

Sometimes I have felt that we are all one soul, the soul making believe like a child, to be different persons. This person and that seem like different windows in a church wall. To one not knowing there would seem to be as many lights as there are windows, yet the light is one. When this thought really fills me (I am merely re-

membering the thought now) there is a glow, and until the perfect thought becomes a memory of itself, I myself seem to be that beautiful thing within me which cannot be touched or heard or seen, but only known.

This is a democratic thought, but it takes an aristocrat to think it, and what could America do with the thinker of thoughts like that but stone him, or ignore him? Well, given this story of his life, and that grave at Delphi, it is fairly likely that he has come into his own, and not too late.

The Road to the Temple. By Susan Glaspell. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

## GEORGE GISSING'S LETTERS

By Henry A. Lappin

**B**EFORE the publication of this book there had been only two collections of George Gissing's letters in print: "Letters to an Editor" and "Letters to Edward Clodd". These were tiny pamphlets, issued in private editions, and limited to twenty five and thirty copies respectively. The contents of the former, printed for his friends by Clement K. Shorter of "The Sphere", remain inaccessible to the general reader; but in the chapter on Gissing in his interesting "Memories" (1916) Clodd has reprinted the novelist's letters to him. Four years after Gissing's death, a Life, to be written by Edouard Bertz, his faithful correspondent and friend of many years, was planned by Messrs. Constable, the London publishers. This projected work was to have consisted in the main of Gissing's letters to Bertz, of which there were (W. H. Hudson at the time wrote to Morley Roberts) "many enough to make a good book — tremendously long and very intimate, containing a full minute history of the whole miser-

able affair of the first marriage". (Hudson's informant, I may add, was Thomas Seccombe, one of Constable's editorial advisers and a devout student of Gissing's work.) But nothing ever came of this design, and now for the first time in this attractive and substantial volume it has been made possible for us to recognize Gissing's very real distinction in the delicate art of letter writing.

These letters are prefaced by a brief and strangely colorless note by Gissing's son Alfred, and have been collected and arranged for publication by Algernon and Ellen Gissing, the novelist's brother and sister-in-law, one of whom supplies a curt editorial word which informs us discouragingly that "portions have necessarily been omitted from many of the letters".

There is much, surely too much, here omitted, or left unrecorded in the editorial notations, but for lovers of Gissing, for those who like the present reviewer never fail to be enchanted by the magic of his melancholy, it is consoling to read in almost every letter convincing evidence of the deep affection Gissing always cherished for his brothers and sisters. This affection, tenderly reciprocated by them, helped to sustain him through the bitter misery of his writing life in the cellars and garrets of London slums until success began to dawn for him with the turn of the century, and a measure of happiness at last came through his association with the gentle Frenchwoman who brought balm to the close of his life during their residence together at St. Jean de Luz, "between the Pyrenees and the sea".

Since in these letters we are told so tantalizingly little about Gissing's more intimate life, it seems likely that for a long time to come Morley Roberts's mournful yet beautiful book,

"The Private Life of Henry Maitland", a thinly veiled biography, will remain our fullest and most authoritative source of information concerning Gissing. The family resented, and still resent, Mr. Roberts's portrait of his friend, yet as W. H. Hudson predicted when the book was first published in 1912, it laid to rest by its courageous and loving candor "the everlasting half whispered sort of tittle tattle going on about poor G."

The information provided in these letters, however, fills, at any rate partially, some gaps in our knowledge of Gissing's career. The earlier period of his life in this country was much less severe than one had thought. He taught German, French, and English in the high school of Waltham, Massachusetts at a salary of eight hundred dollars a year — not so bad for those days — learned the delights of a sleigh ride and the excitements of American politics, and was interviewed by a reporter who wanted "to know where I came from and where I had studied. A high school teacher is an important person here." But then the sharp experiences of Chicago and Troy, etched so vividly on the pages of "New Grub Street", were still in the offing.

Why did Gissing leave the high school? Why, first rate classical scholar that he was, did he make no attempt to embark upon the life of a scholar at an American university? Surely the Harvard classical department would have welcomed this alert and scholarly young Englishman from the faculty of Waltham High School, *ancien élève* of A. S. Wilkins. Why, knowing that on this side there was certain market for his gifts as teacher, did he recross the Atlantic to a life of cruel struggle against such heavy odds?

For the admirers of "Henry Rye-

croft" and "By the Ionian Sea" it will be a delight to follow their author's ever deepening passion for the classics of Greece and Rome, a passion which burns with so pure and sacred a flame throughout this book of letters. Many of these pages supply the perfect marginal commentary upon passage after passage of the two masterpieces of his sunset years. Tacitus, Livy ("his Latin is glorious — history set to the organ"), Catullus, Theocritus — the litany runs on. . . . Perhaps only a man fed by such food, "whom Virgil calmed, whom Sophocles controlled", could have saved his soul alive in the roaring inferno that was Gissing's "New Grub Street".

Letters of George Gissing. Edited by Algernon and Ellen Gissing. Houghton Mifflin Company.

## DIVINE PLAY

By Joseph Collins

**T**HE world is more indebted to Havelock Ellis than to any man of his time for sex enlightenment. Not only has he told some of the truth about sex, but he has told it gracefully and poetically. Recently he wrote:

The longer I live the more I realize the immense importance for the individual of the development through the play function of erotic personality, and for human society of the acquirement of the art of love. At the same time I am ever more astonished at the rarity of erotic personality and the ignorance of the art of love even among those men and women, experienced in the exercise of procreative power, in whom we might most confidently expect to find such development and such art. At times one feels hopeless at the thought that civilization in this supremely intimate field of life has achieved so little. For until it is generally possible to acquire erotic personality, and to master the art of loving, the development of the individual man or woman is marred, the acquirement of human happiness and harmony remains impossible.

The question is: Can erotic personality, or mastery of the art of love, be acquired? Does it not necessitate a sort of genius to accomplish it? The intermingling of love in art and art in love may not be within the reach of everyone, even of those who wish for it, but desire of it is the first step toward realization.

The author of "As It Was" has had the courage to write of the coming of love to her, of its manifestations and of her reactions to it, and to tell how it feels to love and be loved. She made an art of love and to its service she devoted her life.

Had Helen Thomas chosen her parents, she could not have bettered her chances of being an artist by nature. Her father was a genial soul to whom genius had nodded; her mother narrowly escaped being a shrew, but her head was screwed on very tight. As a child, H. T. had neither beauty nor seductiveness, but she had a flair for companionship and a great sense of pride in her body which she admired. She was conscious of many shortcomings, and willing to play Cinderella to her sisters. Then one of England's most promising poets came, gawkish, sensitive, but self reliant and determined. The beauty of their feeling for one another, its inception and development, the care they took that no squawk or squall should disturb the harmony of their encounters, kept them on a plane of love which parallels art.

In this little spiritual biography, the author reveals a deep sense of the privilege that was vouchsafed her. She realizes that in their play, she and her poet-lover-husband were moving among the highest human activities, alike of the body and of the soul. She has such profound respect for the art that they developed, that she writes of it as St. Theresa wrote of God.