

## Novel Notes.

**EYES OF A GIPSY.** By John Murray Gibbon. 7s. 6d. (Methuen.)

The man is to be envied who can make the best of both worlds without the loss of his integrity or self-respect. Mr. Gibbon, in the course of a story which is a long advance upon his previous novels, blends the Old World and the New together with a deftness and ease that deserve to be envied. He makes us love Canada almost as much as he does himself, and nobody has done better in the way of describing the enchanting scenery of the Canadian West. Nor could anyone make better use of the ocean liner and its motley passenger-list as the materials for a prologue which is at once vivid and vivacious. We follow the fortunes of Jacqueline Stuart, the prosperous palmist from Paris, her friend, Maurice, and the girl whom the palmist wills him to marry. There is nothing sinister in the affair, for Maurice would have paired off with Peggy in any event. But the scheme affords the author a capital set-off between the two women, just as the elder one's mild chaperonage makes a shrewd contrast against the evil influence that is hanging over herself. Senator Bonham, a debauchee whom her art has exposed to his annoyance and resentment, pursues her with his wealth and villainy almost to the end. Just when all the characters that we care about have found a pleasant haven in the ranch of Peggy's folks in the Kootenay region among the Rockies, another sleuthy personage reappears on the scene in the form of a fanatical priest whose mission is to exorcise all witchcraft; and Jacqueline emerges by the skin of her teeth from an incredible ordeal thanks to the prompt enterprise and courage of her friends. In this adventure one of the heroes is Skookum Bill, a rough-tongued desperado worthy to rank with the genial ruffians of Bret Harte at his best. The Scottish glamour about the home scenes and the sentiment move us only to wish that writers of other races would take example by Mr. Gibbon, and dress up their various forms of patriotism in as rich a gesture of wit, urbanity, picturesqueness and first-class fiction.

**THE FORTUNES OF HUGO.** By Denis Mackail. 7s. 6d. (Heinemann.)

Mr. Mackail's new story has neither the sweetness nor the essential underlying seriousness of "Greenery Street." Yet his humour is never merely farce; and wildly "improbable" as his latest novel is, it is at least a very forceful caricature of the good-natured and clever, but weak-willed and irresponsible man who is always about to do things, yet—owing of course to "bad luck"—never gets them done. Hugo Peak is in love with his cousin, the daughter of the celebrated newspaper magnate, Lord Biggleswade, who refuses his consent to a marriage until Hugo has proved his capacity to do *something*, if it is only getting a solitary article accepted by some journal. Hugo's wild and

floundering attempts at "making good," and the irrepressible buoyancy with which he emerges from his many defeats, by which he embroils others beside himself in very embarrassing situations, make delicious fun, and it is safe to predict that the ingenuous "Free Lance" will be among the most popular of Mr. Mackail's creations.

**WHICH HATH BEEN: A NOVEL OF REINCARNATION.** By Mrs. Jack McLaren. 7s. 6d. (Cecil Palmer.)

In this self-styled novel of reincarnation the authoress has taken an unworked subject and has used it with much success. Curiously, she is at her best in the scenes of nineteen hundred years ago rather than in those of the present time. Some of the happenings of the story in its contemporary setting make a strain on the credulity of the reader. Cause and effect are not sufficiently related. The interest then is chiefly centred on the scenes in Assyria, where Karan of the White Gowns, the daughter of a rich merchant, falls secretly in love with Meron of the Oasis. Fate intervenes and makes her the wife of a Roman governor. All unwittingly she kills her lover. But the soul never dies. At a suitable time it returns to earth to inhabit a body again, so that it may start afresh from where it left off. Karan and Meron come into life again, this time among English scenes. Their twentieth century romance has a happier ending than had that of an earlier life. Such a story as this should have a successful career on the cinema screen. The carry-back to a costume period in the Assyrian desert is in the best movie

manner and the plentiful incident (with the emphasis rather on constant movement than on probability) would be equally effective when pictured as when read.

**CRAVEN HOUSE.** By Patrick Hamilton. 7s. 6d. (Constable.)

The author of "Monday Morning" has succeeded in a very difficult task. He has allowed a very humorous, sensitive and vivid imagination to play upon the inmates and fortunes of a London boarding-house, and, in the sequel, has expressed his vision in a very considerable novel. Fun, character, youth, in a suburban setting with the ample canvas and grotesque touches of a Dickens are the dominant merits of "Craven House." There is a simple love story, told with fine feeling, which only ends when Craven House itself is no more and long-suffering Elsie Nixon joins Master Wildman at the gate. A perfect study, complete, ironical and hugely diverting, of a modern "vamp," Miss Cotterill, with flesh-coloured stockings, a warm, rosy mouth, a little dog and a polo-playing uncle. Elsie's mother, Mrs. Nixon, a very disagreeable Spartan parent, provides a crisis only comparable to that provided by the late Uriah Heep when he provoked David to violence. Mrs. Nixon shakes the foundations of the boarding-house in which she, and others well worth meeting, had lived for three guineas a week for fifteen years. It is a delight to read the book and see how she did it. "Craven House" is one of those rare books one re-reads and remembers.

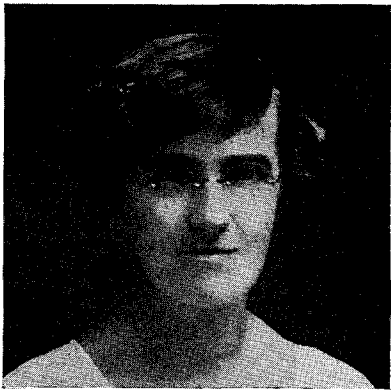


Mr. John Murray Gibbon.

From a drawing by Kathleen Shackleton.

**LOOMS OF DESTINY.** By Ellen M. Fowkes. 3s. 6d. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

Lancashire readers will welcome another story dealing with the early days of Manchester Radicalism. As the pioneer city of Reform, and the heart of the greatest



Miss Ellen M. Fowkes.

industrial area in the kingdom, Manchester is not adequately represented in popular literature. We have here a very able effort towards putting right this deficiency. From reliable sources the author has obtained sufficient data to make the story true in the historical sense. From her imagination she has skilfully woven a story in which

to present the data. Actual characters like Bamford and Hunt, actual incidents such as those of the Press Gang and "Peterloo," appear together with imaginary but altogether representative characters such as the "Scissor Grinder" and the Quaker merchant, Salmesbury. The result is a stirring and readable story giving the atmosphere of the times, helpful in an effort to understand the various influences which have shaped Manchester's existing social and industrial conditions. Like most women writers the author succeeds best with her male characters and of these the best is "The Old Scissor Grinder," a character which will remain long in the minds of all who read this book.

**THE PHANTOM DRUMMER: A Romance of the Norfolk Marshland.** By Athelstan Ridgway. 7s. 6d. (Andrew Melrose.)

"The Phantom Drummer" is Mr. Ridgway's second novel only, but it bears no marks of the tyro's workmanship. Its construction is not all that could be desired; the cumulative, crushing force of events might have been made more convincing and inevitable by a greater ingenuity in plot; yet this is only apparent when the book is compared with an established classic in the same genre. That it irresistibly invites such comparisons is the gauge of Mr. Ridgway's uncommon ability. Waldo Trimmingham's character is deeply studied and arrestingly portrayed; the desolate character of the marshlands, their wild life and climatic conditions, form an unusual and well delineated background; the Norfolk peasants are living flesh and blood, not mere types but subtly differentiated organisms; Mr. Ridgway is never sentimental; his writing is unmarred either by the inelegance of the shallow thinker or the meretricious preciosity of the *poseur*. He has humour, a true feeling for prose, a seldom erring instinct in the selection of the inevitable word, and an easy felicity in the use of striking metaphor and simile. The minor characters are not so well realised as the central figure, Waldo, which makes the book in some sort a "one man" novel. If Mr. Ridgway can but remedy this and beware of loose ends in his plot-making, his positive literary virtues are so outstanding that there is almost no rank in the hierarchy of novelists to which he may not eventually aspire.

**A DAUGHTER OF CATHAY.** By J. C. Keyte. 7s. 6d. (Alston Rivers.)

Between the exciting opening and the poignant climax of his Chinese-heroine novel Mr. Keyte has developed a story of singular interest, and in the person of Minsan has added to the gallery of English-moulded women of the East a portrait of many attractions. No doubt the sympathies of most readers will desire that Minsan's love for her deliverer should meet its due reward, but when

the last page is finished few will question the sanity of the conclusion which restored this daughter of Cathay to her own people. That is a tribute to the art which, without undue emphasis, sets forth the essential differences of East and West, and makes it clear that in the long run Barbara would bring more lasting happiness to Alan than the rival of whom she was unconscious. In the form he has given to Chinese names, making them typical and yet easy for mental pronunciation and for remembrance, Mr. Keyte has set an example which translators of Russian novels should imitate.

**THE STRANGE FAMILY.** By E. H. Lacon Watson. 7s. 6d. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

Mr. Lacon Watson has written more novels than books of essays, but he brings something of the pleasant, discursive, ruminant habit of the essayist to the writing of his stories. He writes this domestic comedy with a quiet humour, a quiet irony, a delicate realism and easy charm of style; it is not an exciting story, though it has its exciting moments; but it is a deftly fashioned and an attractive story, and ingeniously reserves a surprise for its last page. The narrator is Rudolf Strange, and the tale is of himself, of Jonathan Waring, the blacksmith's son, of Percy Cudden and the objectionable Reggie Hicks, boys together at the start and pupils of Rudolf's father, the Canon, and young men at the close. Also it is the tale of Rudolph's delightful sister, Elsie, who has a disturbing influence on Rudolph's fellow pupils and is responsible for the final surprise. The gentle Canon, his quaint admirer, Miss Mooney, the four boys, the village and other of its folk—Elsie in particular—are all drawn with a skill and carefulness of detail that bring the reader intimately acquainted with them. "The Strange Family" has the naturalness, the vividness of a true chronicle of real people, and makes very interesting and very pleasant reading.

**DAPHNE ADEANE.** By Maurice Baring. 8s. 6d. (Heinemann.)

Just as the reader is wondering when he is to be introduced to the name-heroine of this story, he is taken to a private view and learns that the portrait of Daphne Adeane exhibited there is that of a woman who is dead. So it is the spirit rather than the person of Daphne Adeane which suffuses the novel. But, in addition to her widowed husband, two of her lovers survive, and these two, Leo Detrick the author, and Francis Greene the doctor, find in the married Fanny Choyce so startling a replica of their lost ideal that the actual presence of Daphne is not needed. Perhaps Mr. Baring does not fully prepare his reader for Fanny's surrender to Francis Greene, but he does make effective use of the circumstances under which she discovers that she must make a renunciation equal to that made by her husband in the case of the woman he had loved. It will be divined from the foregoing that this is an unusual novel, but nothing short of actual perusal can convey the quiet distinction of its writing. Mr. Baring holds his pen in restraint, touches in his colours with deft strokes, and so produces a series of portraits which will rank high in his gallery.

**SPRING SORREL.** By Douglas Pulleyne. 7s. 6d. (Allen & Unwin.)

It is a sad day for Toby Britton when Spring Sorrel, "the girl next door," takes to the music-hall stage, on which she rapidly wins fame as a dancer. Toby, who becomes a sailor, has from his boyhood had old-fashioned ideas about the opposite sex, and wishes to keep all the women he likes "under a glass dome." The contrast between him, with his sturdy common sense and unwavering reliability, and Spring, with her butterfly gaiety, is admirably drawn. It is obvious from the start that Toby and Spring are made for each other—their very quarrels prove as much. But the fact that the end is foreseen in no way detracts from the enjoyment of this delicate and