

Colonel Harvey too flits through the pages, with a host of other notables, now hesitating as to whether to allow the General to testify before the Supreme Council, now terribly upset because of tardiness of the British to invite General Pershing to decorate the grave of the "Unknown Soldier" and finally "burning the wires to Washington" to prevent the complete withdrawal of our troops. General Allen, it may be said, reveals no incurable enthusiasm for our American plenipotentiaries. "It is a great misfortune," he remarks impersonally, "that we do not attach more importance in the selection of our representation abroad to special fitness for the mission."

Whatever the difficulties were, however,—and they were great,—they were met without sacrificing either his principles or his warm friendships with the Allies. It would be an American of curiously twisted mind who could lay aside this book without a feeling of reassurance and of pride in the record, and in the all-too-rare type of American spirit revealed on every page.

CHRISTINA MERRIMAN.

New York City.

Strenuous Americans

Seven famous Americans,—Jesse James, Admiral Dewey, Brigham Young, Frances Willard, James J. Hill, P. T. Barnum, Mark Hanna, William McKinley,—are explored in Roy F. Dibble's book (*Boni and Liveright*, \$3.00). He calls them *STRENUOUS AMERICANS*, and that most accurately describes both them and their biographer. Since he has so frankly used Lytton Strachey for his model it is inevitable that Mr. Dibble should hear his essays spoken of in comparison with *Eminent Victorians*. By the comparison he does not suffer as much as one might have supposed anyone competing with that rare book would suffer. He lacks Mr. Strachey's subtlety, his brilliant indirection, his delicate attack and stiletto-like demolishment of his object. Mr. Dibble is unaware of the existence of the stiletto. He slashes about with a broad-sword or a meat axe; but he rarely misses, and for that one can be thankful.

Admiral Dewey is the most successful essay in the book; it is a masterly drawing of the weak, blustering, ambitious, hearty,

and conniving man who destroyed the Spanish "fleet," put the Filipino "army" to rout, laid "siege" to Manila, and added to the glory and territory of his country and to his own fame. The whole unhappy story is there; surely the darkest page in the foreign relations of the United States: powerless Spain, the defenseless Philipines, a hypocritical and chauvinistic President, a great nation,—the irresistible force meeting the pitifully movable body, and the noble Admiral ready and willing to bear off the spoils. Mr. Dibble has not spared Dewey or his countrymen; the truth cannot but be beneficial to the latter.

Of Frances Willard he has written with some insight and much delightful language; her portrait is not unworthy to be set alongside Mr. Strachey's Florence Nightingale. Indeed, it is language which is at once Mr. Dibble's blessing and his betrayer. He has apparently an unquenchable fount of it; he should learn when to turn off the spigot, and he should learn, too, when scandal is merely smutty and unnecessary, and when it really adds to the interpretation of character. One or two of the essays, notably the one on Hill, might well have been omitted; they are too sketchy to add much to the book. Yet on the whole the book is admirable; its quality can be measured by the relative unimportance of the things one finds to complain of in it.

DOROTHY G. VAN DOREN.

New York City.

Stephen Crane

Of late it has been apparent that somebody must soon "do the life" of Stephen Crane. Thomas Beer's recently published volume (*STEPHEN CRANE, A STUDY IN AMERICAN LETTERS*, Knopf, \$2.00) is of more satisfying proportions than Thomas L. Raymond's miniature biography of the same author, and will be of material assistance to the future compiler of a still more comprehensive work. Many pitfalls surround the biographer of this short-lived genius, but Mr. Beer has eluded them neatly. A sentimental volume on Crane would be intolerable; a cynical sketch only a shade less dreadful. A reproachful tone would blast the narrative; pathological analysis, however tempting, would be

barren. More enticing than any of these was the siren call of sensationalism, but to it the biographer wisely closed his ears. Not even by the emphatic denial of lurid falsehoods has he preserved their memory.

The book that has emerged from these dangers is a straightforward, almost blunt account of a man who himself hated sham. The presentation is graphic, sometimes cinematographic,—rapid action, close-ups, abrupt transitions, scenes chopped short, glimpses. As an interpreter Mr. Beer is sympathetic but chilly. One may say of him, as he says of Crane, that he lacks “that profound and diffused sentimentalism that turns an individual reaction into a universal woe,” and that “the quality of his nature” forbids “outcries after an event.” The book, too, is confessedly “the demolition of a romantic myth.” Yet his account is vividly appealing. The pictures he creates,—of the baby “who took cold with regularity”; of the boy who had a passion for red hues, baseball, and polysyllables; of the youth who haunted the dives of the Bowery but nurtured an ideal love; of the enthusiast who unrelentingly pursued the romance of reality in Texas, Mexico, and Greece; of the war correspondent who “went about the business of risking a wound with extraordinary and scientific zeal”; of the author whose “chromatic talk” surrounded him with superficial admirers; of the dying man who lay at Badenweiler stroking his dog,—are none the less poignant because they are stark of comment. Crane himself would probably have written a biography in much the same fashion. Resemblance between author and subject extends even to style. Such paired sentences as, “He lay on a rug aft and was fed casually on stewed tomatoes. Cuba vanished from him in an opalescent languor . . .”, show that curious juxtaposition of commonplace and “chromatic” so marked in *The Red Badge of Courage*.

There will have to be another book on Crane, a more critical, a more categorical, a more definitive treatment, adorned perhaps with the paraphernalia of scholarship; but it is improbable that this authoritative work will be written by so appropriate or congenial an interpreter as Mr. Beer,—unless, to be sure, Joseph Conrad, who contributes a fascinating introduction

to the present volume, might be persuaded to turn biographer.

CLINTON MINDIL.

New York City.

Lady Paget's Memoirs

We have here a book which is sure to please the many, and to disgust a few. (EMBASSIES OF OTHER DAYS, by Walburga, Lady Paget. Doran, 2 Vols., \$12.00.) Agreeably written, it is an admirable example of what the Russians express by the word *Poustoy*, which means empty. There is absolutely nothing in it which we don't know, if we except perhaps the numerous descriptions of the dresses worn by the author and the people she met on various occasions. The soul of Worth, the one great inimitable Worth, who founded the dynasty of that name will surely have rejoiced in Heaven to find that there exists at least one person on earth grateful to him for the lovely garments he made for her. But some of the people mentioned in these Recollections of a brilliant life, won't perhaps have as many reasons as the famous man milliner of Eugénie's times, to bless the faultless memory of Lady Paget, among others the late Empress Frederick, who considering the great affection which she had for her could have expected to be spoken of in kinder tones than those used in the appreciation of her person and character. To be sure there were family reasons to which Lady Paget alludes here and there, that might have embittered her in regard to Queen Victoria's eldest daughter, but surely they ought not to have interfered with her appreciation of a woman who, whatever may have been her faults, was infinitely superior to most of her contemporaries.

I have said that there is nothing we did not know before in these Memoirs, but still we find one small detail in them, which is extremely characteristic, and which confirms a fact known to very few until now. On March 8, 1888, the old Kaiser was dying, and the Archduke Rudolph of Austria received a telegram from the then Prince William of Prussia, telling him his grandfather had passed away. It proved a false alarm, because the Emperor only expired the next morn-