

The Story of Mme. Curie

Familiar as we now are with the far-reaching consequences of the discovery of radium, it seems almost incredible that the nation which has recently been honoring the memory of Pasteur could have remained so indifferent, in a practical sense, to the research work of Pierre and Marie Curie over a period of twenty-five years, during which scientists of other countries were eagerly taking advantage of the revelations placed freely at their disposal. "I pray you to thank the Minister," wrote Pierre Curie twenty years ago to a friend who begged him to accept the decoration of the Légion d'Honneur, "and to inform him that I do not in the least feel the need of a decoration, but that I do feel the greatest need for a laboratory."

That modest wish was not fulfilled, and only through the aid of arduous lectureships and the Nobel award were these two scientists of genius enabled to conduct their difficult experiments and maintain an exceedingly simple household. Even today, when widespread experimentation with radioactive elements is made possible in America by our unrivaled system of special endowments, Madame Curie in Paris is still patiently working under severe handicaps, alleviated to some extent by the recent impulsive generosity of American women in presenting her with a gram of the precious metal whose presence in the universe she was the first to detect.

In *PIERRE CURIE* (Macmillan, \$2.25) she tells in simple,—almost bare,—language, the story of her husband's life, of the dreams and struggles and successes they shared, and of her work since his untimely death in 1906. An arresting account of her activities during the war is included. In those years the retiring woman who had always shunned publicity became the efficient executive, driving her own radiologic car into the battle areas and, with the aid of her daughter, installing radiologic apparatus in two hundred hospital bases in the zones of the French and Belgian armies.

The whole book, written only upon the urgent insistence of friends, reveals a nobility and an unspectacular denial of self that are inspiring and salutary. The

spirit shown by Pierre and Marie Curie,—and, be it added, by younger servants of science like Banting and Best,—in foregoing patent privileges and commercial rewards for the discovery of truths which all the world is seeking, is one of the best guarantees we have of the continuity and the advance of civilization.

K. R. JAEGER.

New York City.

A Guide for the Greedy

At last a modern champion has appeared for gluttony. True, Elizabeth Robbins Pennell, under the title of *The Feasts of Autolycus*, broke the ground for that excellent championship twenty-seven years ago, but that was before most of our present-day litterateurs were born, and it is fitting that they should glut their ears with the charming Epicureanism of *A GUIDE FOR THE GREEDY* (Lippincott, \$2.00). For after all, though Mrs. Pennell writes a very paean on the virtues of the glutton, and deplores the lack of a real zest for eating in her own sex, it is not really gluttony she means, but the nicest palate, the rarest discrimination, the most exquisite flavor. She is as far as possible from Rossetti's request for "twelve eggs, eight of which must be good."

Mrs. Pennell writes rapturously of the mushroom, "large and black and fresh from the market"; she paints the glories of the tomato; the goose is to her an "archangelic bird;" and the humble radish at last receives its due in positively lyric praise: "the tiny, round radish, pulled in the early hours of the morning, still in its first virginal purity, tender, sweet, yet peppery, with all the piquancy of the young girl not quite a child, not yet a woman . . . there is a separate joy in the low sound of teeth crunching in their crispness." Fresh rolls from Vienna, truffled French sausages, plover's eggs, caviare with cream, onion soup, partridges braised with mushrooms, strawberries with the hulls on, dipped in sugar and eaten with thanksgiving for sauce,—all these and many more Mrs. Pennell causes to appear and vanish before a hungry reader's eyes; and after such a feast, as she justly says, "if you still hanker for the roast beef and horse-radish of old

England, then go and gorge yourself at the first convenient restaurant." She need not fear such a result; the end will be much more alarming, for after reading of such nectar and ambrosia even the most calloused reader will certainly resolve never to eat again unless Mrs. Pennell will come and cook for him.

DOROTHY G. VAN DOREN.

New York City.

A Bookseller's Secrets

If you believe that a bookstore is but an outgrowth of a stationer's shop, or just one of the minor "departments" of a department store; if you secretly contend that one goes into the business of selling books because he, or she, cannot make a success of anything else; if you think that nameless books can be sold to nameless customers, as shoes or bricks or other necessities,—you will be speedily disillusioned, with many a chuckle and sympathetic heart-throb in the bargain, by what Madge Jenison calls a human comedy of bookselling, (*SUNWISE TURN*, Dutton, \$2.00).

Miss Jenison admits: "I cannot remember just when it began to seem to me that a bookshop of a different kind must be opened in America, and opened at once, and opened by me." The thought came to her suddenly, in an unguarded moment; an hour before she had as little thought of opening a coal mine. But the plan was not put into execution too hastily, not before its author had her campaign well mapped out, nor before she had spent many a day in search of the desired location and many an evening with paper, pencil, and two columns of tell-tale figures. If you admire initiative, originality, and courage in the teeth of discouragement, you will thrill at the reading of this tale, so human, so simple, and yet so challenging. And what is more, you will learn things about books and their potentialities that you may not have dreamed of before.

Miss Jenison will tell you of a conversation with James Branch Cabell, of how she tried to sell Thorstein Veblen a copy of one of his own books, what she thinks of Theodore Dreiser, how Mr. Knopf used to interrupt her lunch hour, and what

kind of books to sell to a silk manufacturer. And if you read as far as page 150 (a certainty if you finish the first two paragraphs) she will confess that "nobody knows much about bookselling," attributing this weakness to the "impotence of the bookseller's imagination, feeling and brains in relation to his work."

DALE WARREN.

Boston, Mass.

From a Juvenile Critic

In our sarcastic heart we have long thought of the United States as a land of forward children and backward adults. Occasionally some cheerful mellow tone in the pronouncements of our elders or some tone of downright authoritative in the speech of our juniors obliges us to sheathe the cynicism of the verdict. Among the numerous responses to *THE FORUM's* standing invitation to readers to submit their own book reviews, no manuscript, however superior on special counts, has made a more direct assault upon the attention of the editors of this department than have the six following notices submitted by a critic of thirteen years of age. They are not models for men of forty; but many a man of forty can learn something from this young reviewer's instinct for brevity and appositeness:

The Happy Isles

Yay! Mr. Basil King is *not* as sentimental as usual in *THE HAPPY ISLES* (Harper's, \$2.00). This novel tells the story of Tom Whitelaw's life, trials, and triumphs from the time he is kidnapped as a babe, until at the culmination of the book he is received by his wealthy parents; back once more into the Happy Isles. All this smacks of a very sentimental love story which it ain't (excuse our slang). But no, there is nothing of the sort; *The Happy Isles* is a very satisfactory book.

Dr. Nye

We have read almost every one of Joseph Lincoln's books and laughed aloud over most of them. But in *DR. NYE* (Appleton, \$2.00) we were disappointed.