

tate through trains and the interchange of cars. Nevertheless, while construction fell off in comparison with the previous decade, many new lines were projected or begun during the war, old lines were improved or consolidated, rolling stock was greatly increased, and through service to the West introduced. Profits from railways were unprecedentedly large, stocks which hitherto had maintained a low market level now rising to par or a premium, and many roads paying dividends for the first time in their history.

More familiar, doubtless, as matter of recent history, is the activity in manufacturing, not only in lines in which the war made an extraordinary demand, but in many others also. The production of cotton textiles, naturally, declined, though profits were large; on the other hand, the demand for woollens expanded by leaps and bounds, many cotton factories being converted into woollen mills in consequence. Less creditable, but enormously profitable withal, was the shoddy industry, lending its name, as time went on, to the cheap performance in other industrial lines of which the war period was full, and to the moneyed aristocracy which the new wealth suddenly created. The greatest stimulus to manufacturing, of course, was the government contracts, which furnished opportunities for exceptional profits as well as for extensive frauds, and from which many a Northern patriot extracted both riches and social position.

In the wide field of commercial life, the war wrought more diverse effects. The period saw the rise of values due to greenbacks and treasury notes; the establishment of the national banking system and the suppression of wildcat paper money in the West; the expansion of savings banks, whose deposits were swelled not only by the savings of labor, but by soldiers' wages and bounty payments; unexampled progress in life insurance, with the rise of accident insurance and marked gains in fire and marine insurance; and phenomenal response to the repeated offers of government bonds. The post office, between 1861 and 1865, introduced more reforms than can be credited to any other Presidential Administration, before or since. The consolidation of telegraph and transportation companies brought new problems in the aggregation of capital, which resulted in new methods and relationships for banks, trust companies, speculators, and investors; and new difficulties in such matters as prices, rates, and monopolization. Of the career of the Camden and Amboy Railway, the most hated monopoly of the time, controlling transportation between New York and Philadelphia, Professor Fite gives a particularly good account. Protective tariff interests, on the other hand, worked successfully

against the continuance of reciprocity with Canada, and the American merchant marine suffered eclipse.

The prosperity of employers and capitalists was not, unfortunately, duplicated in the labor world. With the introduction of paper money, the gratifying conditions which had prevailed before 1860 suddenly changed. "Peace in the industrial world gave way to discontent; labor, indeed, remained scarce, even more scarce than before, but the laborer was no longer sure of his daily bread and of decent comfort; the ability to lay by for a rainy day was threatened, and instead of being petted and humored labor came to regard itself as aggrieved; it assumed an attitude of hostility towards employers and took concerted measures in self-defence" (p. 183). Wages not only failed to keep pace with the rise of prices, but were further unfavorably affected by foreign immigration, the increased employment of women and negroes, and the use of machinery. Professor Fite is clear that the war-time scarcity of labor has been exaggerated; but the quality of labor deteriorated, unions became aggressively militant, and the longer strikes generally failed. Salaries, too, failed to share equitably in the general advance, the most bitter illustration being the college teachers, whose virtually stationary incomes often entailed positive want.

We cannot follow in detail here. Professor Fite's exceedingly interesting chapters on the course of public improvements, education and literature, luxuries and amusements, and charity. In spite of the heavy burden of taxation, the years of the civil war saw widespread activity in building, and in the construction of waterworks, gas, and sewerage systems, street railways, fire-alarm telegraphs, and public parks; though to a considerable extent this was only the continuation of a development already begun. Street improvements, however, halted, and filthy thoroughfares bred frightful disease. One thinks with horror of New York, with a death rate in 1863 of one to every thirty-five inhabitants, and 12,000 cases of typhoid fever and 1,200 cases of smallpox in a single year. On the other hand, there was conspicuous increase in the number of new churches and public buildings; new colleges and technical schools were established and old ones enriched, though the college enrolment as a whole declined; public schools were filled to overflowing; and even the wages of teachers advanced to about the level of those of low-grade mechanics. Public libraries grew apace, literature flourished, theatres were generally crowded, even in the darkest days of the war, and the round of social functions went on with added feverishness. Of public and private charity, the war afforded striking and widespread illus-

tration, from the smallest local efforts to the great Sanitary Commission, with its twenty-five million dollars worth of beneficent service.

Professor Fite has evidently been oppressed at times by his wealth of material. The footnotes bulge with statistics and citations; statements relegated to the notes are sometimes quite as significant as those of the text; while here and there a paragraph ends abruptly, with a note to the effect that the writer has accumulated a mass of evidence on the topic which cannot now be presented. The index is slight for a book of this character, the treatment of persons and places being singularly poor. Occasionally, too, a faulty passage suggests haste or lack of revision. For the most part, however, these are only the faults of unpractised writing, or the irregularities of path-breaking in a new field. Taken as a whole, the book is eminently readable, and, in places, graphically written, while its scholarly thoroughness makes it a work to be reckoned with by any one who shall hereafter set himself to tell comprehensively the story of the civil war.

#### CURRENT FICTION.

*The Ramrodders.* By Holman F. Day. New York: Harper & Bros.

Stories of American politics commonly suffer from too much intention. It is over-clear what the author is driving at in the way of partisan or moral effectiveness. Yankee politics has seemed to afford a particularly uncertain foothold to the novelist. Either seductions of dialect and local color have proved too strong, or the imagination has been insufficiently stirred by the public scene. Twice of late, however, with "Mr. Crewe's Career" and "The Ramrodders," a really vigorous narrative has emerged from the vague limbo in which float the materials of the historical story-teller's art. Mr. Churchill's theme was the corrupt dominance of a government by a corporation; Mr. Day's is its dominance by an insincere tradition. The name of the State involved is nowhere mentioned in the course of the story, but that is not because the author feared to acknowledge his locus. This kind of anonymity, formal as it may be, serves to enhance the suggestion of a wider meaning in the parable. However, the "color" is unmistakable. The Hon. Thelismér Thornton is as racy a native in his way as Hosea Biglow or David Harum. His fund of rustic parables is inexhaustible, and no contretemps is too serious to be hit off, Lincoln-wise, with some analogy from "up our way." Thornton has been known for many years as the "Duke of Fort Canibas"—an up-State district which he represents in the State Legislature. His adroitness and lack of scruple have made him a power in the

State. At eighty-five he determines to retire from politics, and to make a grandson his successor. Harlan Thornton has no desire to enter politics, and is outraged to find himself nominated by an unscrupulous trick. Once in the game, however, he makes up his mind to play it according to his own rules, not his grandfather's—to play fair, and to put himself on the honorable side of every issue. Thornton, Senior, has no such intention. He believes that his grandson will be very quickly shaken down from his untenable heights by contact with practical politics. A reform agitation is in progress, and the Duke of Fort Canibas feels that neither of the advertised candidates for the Republican nomination is strong enough for the situation. Consequently, he persuades a contemporary of his own, an ex-Governor, to stand for the nomination—believing that he will stand by the party machine in the Governor's chair. Young Thornton comes out of the fight a strong man. There are, of course, two girls in his case, but they are neither of them conventional, and the "love-interest" is not too obviously lugged into a story of unusual force.

*Why Did He Do It?* By Bernard Capes. New York: Brentano's.

Stories of fantastic plot and whimsical manner are by no means rare, but in this instance both machinery and personnel give an effect of originality hardly, perhaps, to be borne out by chill analysis. Inventiveness is the word. Hitherto, we believe, the philosopher's stone has not been identified with "the stone of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge." Set it in a ring, and give to the wearer of the ring that knowledge of good and evil which was not meant for mankind, and you have a novel fulcrum for twentieth-century romance. The "he" of the title is a Professor Urchin, antiquarian, and director of the department of antiquities in the "United Goods Stores," London. The professor is not a recluse: on a convivial occasion his young host, Mr. Roger Mandrake, bets that he can steal something from under the noses of the officials and detectives of the great shop. The professor undertakes "in case of accidents to hold him immune." The next day the young man makes the attempt, and is at once arrested: to his amazement, the professor denies all knowledge of a bet, and Mandrake is hurried off to prison. The case is not pushed, but the youth's reputation is seriously injured, since he has been discharged rather than acquitted. The fact that he is in love with the professor's daughter makes matters worse. Both the lovers are at loss to explain what looks like wanton perfidy on the part of the professor. "Why did he do it?" The key to the answer is to be found in the character of the article stolen—a rare book in which the profes-

sor has discovered a clue to a mystery of great import. Mandrake's random selection of this book leads the antiquary to the suspicion that one other at least is on the trail of the secret. What that secret is we have already hinted: far be it from us to unravel the series of events which lead to its discovery, or to describe the strange events which follow. That true love is rewarded is the least important consideration. The style is far better than would be expected in a yarn of this sort: Mr. Capes has a turn for epigram, and it is just as well that his whimsical habit is too much for his intention to make a solemn and impressive thing of his mystery.

*The Master-Girl.* By Ashton Hilliers. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

To make a plausible heroine of romance out of that stark and by all accounts unprepossessing person, the cave woman, is something of a feat. Mr. Hilliers does not conceal the fact that the "master-girl" was in some respects unlike the Gibson girl. She had, for instance, small hairy ears, which she "pricked perpetually," and she scalped her enemies in a way now considered unladylike. Nevertheless, she is made out an attractive person, and one does not grudge her the authority over her husband which, according to the legend, was given to her first among women to enjoy. From the hour in which she captures the primal wooer who has set forth to capture her, the question of dominance is settled. Her supreme achievement is the invention of the bow, which gives her the place of chief-tainness over her husband's tribe, and changes all the conditions of tribal life thereafter. It is a picture well "calculated" to please the eye of the feminist. However, we do not take it to be a tract, so much as a parable of vigorous and suggestive type. The advance of the race rather than of a sex is the theme. But taken purely on its ground of fiction, the narrative has enough of spirit and simplicity to stand on its own merits. It is quite as likely to interest the small boy as the antiquary or the new woman.

*Letters to My Son.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

This is a kind of thing which ought to have been done better if it was to be done at all. The effect of the actual performance is rather unpleasant. The idea is that of a woman of thirty, who after seven years of marriage finds herself with child. She is much pleased, but almost as much frightened, and, getting it into her head that she may very likely never see him, writes a series of letters to be read by him in case she dies.

The style of emotional smartness, hysteria varied by flippancy, in which they are written, might perhaps be tolerated

in a very young girl in the circumstances, but must be distressing, not to say unseemly, in a woman of thirty:

Oh, little thing, if your mammy has to leave you and by any chance gets to Heaven, they won't want her there very long. She'll always be leaning out of a top-story window, trying to catch sight of her baby as he goes out for his walk, or else forgetting to do her singing while she worries about his gaiters being long enough, or his vests warm enough.

So goes the strain; and some there be, no doubt, who will find it amusing, or touching, or both. Good material does not lack, in the way of maternal feeling and maternal moralizing, but all is spoiled for the sensitive reader by the habitual slop-over of the style.

MR. HILL ON NATIONAL RESOURCES

*Highways of Progress.* By James J. Hill. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.50 net.

Here is a vigorous book, from one who can put into the printed page the same effective energy and directness of aim that have marked his efforts in the business world. Much of the material has already had a greater or less degree of publicity. The opening chapter, delivered before the Agricultural Society of Minnesota four years ago, had much to do with stimulating the present deep interest in the general subject of conservation of our national resources, while the volume concludes with a substantial reproduction of the address delivered by Mr. Hill before the conference of Governors assembled at the White House in 1907. Other chapters have appeared in whole or in parts in various periodicals, and yet an unbroken unity of purpose and the inherent value of each part warrant republication in book form.

The first three chapters, with the tenth and sixteenth, deal with agricultural conditions and prospects. Much has been written of our wasteful methods, and the sure disaster to which they must lead, if not corrected, but no one has put it quite so lucidly and forcibly as Mr. Hill. We boast of our immense wheat crops, but when we are brought down from a seemingly magnificent total of nearly three-quarters of a billion bushels to the generally overlooked fact of a ten-year average of less than fourteen bushels per acre, we readily assent to the brief comment, "It is a disgraceful record." Our inspiration at the thought of the busy American farmer swarming into the rich new regions of the West, as they are opened up, is somewhat dampened when we realize how often this means that he is abandoning fields worn by wasteful methods beyond the point of profitable tillage, only to repeat the same unintelligent process with the virgin soil to which he removes. With no radical revolu-