

Army men know just how much the morale of troops depends on such unofficial leadership; how fortunate the country that produces such men. So has it been once more with France. We quit Gaspard on the Avenue Alexandre III, hobbling along in the tranquil evening light. He has lost a leg; his bunkies, Burette the journalist, Meusse the savant, have been killed at his side. But with him are his mother and his wife. Before him hops another undisciplinable, irrepressible little Gaspard. And, together, they go—"towards the dome of the Invalides."

Such a book, in spite of what a translator who wishes to pass off the Gallic Cock for one of the edible variety of the gender can do to it, will make many friends. But to get the full measure of enjoyment out of it, one must, at the commencement of the war, have feared for the life of France. Only then, in realization that "Gaspard" is testimony of the perennial vigor of the land, will the song that was in the heart of the author while he wrote commence in one's own. There will come to the reader the emotions experienced, the last day of July, 1914, by some Americans bound from Germany for Paris. All day they had been overwhelmed by sight of the German troops. At Frankfurt the guard had said to them "If there's a war, better come back to us!" Outside the tunnel at Mayence there was stationed a corporal's guard, shouldering guns six feet above the ground, each man a simulacrum of the horned Siegfried. All along the line to Metz there were officers and soldiers, arrogant and expectant, eager to step over the border and crush their ancient enemies. The Americans, French partisans, went from depression into gloom. Finally, the train passed the frontier. And there were the French soldiers! They must have been Normans, they were so tall and athletic. For men about to be crushed they were most cheerful and carefree and confident. They were laughing and talking, exchanging sallies with the passengers, rolling each other down the embankment. The Americans at the time did not know it was Gaspard and his comrades. But it did come over them with joyous reassurance that while the spirit that animated those soldiers persisted, France could never die.

P. L. ROSENFELD.

Curiosity Satisfied

Three Sons and a Mother, by Gilbert Cannan. New York: George H. Doran Co. \$1.50 net.

HOW many of us would be really interested if we were set down in Manchester of 1850? There might be some with an aloof desire to know a little more in detail the origins of commercial Liberalism; perhaps early factory organization would attract others. But, however an idea might intrigue us, it is probable that the dull town itself would soon produce intense boredom. It seems as if Mr. Cannan had been tricked by some such antithesis. It would be interesting, he must have imagined, to look into this subsoil of our culture, find out what it did to its people, why it stifled the wayward in them, what roots of the present were strongest in it. But when, as a conscientious novelist, he came to reconstruct it, it repelled him to indifference—an indifference and repulsion which is shared by the readers except in some of the better passages, when he could write of lyrical or canny persons. His interest remained for the most part mere curiosity.

A Scottish family, the Lawries, making its way in the world, is the protagonist. At the top was God—the quaint,

terrible and intimate God of the vivid Scot. Under him reigned the mother, Margaret, a widow. She had broken with her brothers to marry a poor poet of a minister; so now her sons must justify her, they must build the family respectability and become rich. This process seemed as righteous and inevitable to her as if it could have been read out of the Old Testament. Jamie, the eldest, dreamed of being a Napoleon, and began by going to work for his transplanted uncle in Thrigsby—for which we might read Manchester. Thrigsby span and span without caring what it was spinning, except that the cloth might sell. It grew dirtier and more tawdry, richer and poorer. The Lawries moved into it *en masse*. From the first Jamie felt uncomfortable. Not so Tom, or Margaret, or John, or the complacent clans.

"Tom stood dourly looking on at the group of Leslies and Lawries blocking the pathway for the crowd of stove-pipe hatted gentlemen and full-skirted ladies as they came streaming out of church—for all the world," thought Tom, who possessed an inward wit of his own, 'like the animals coming out of the Ark.' Not such a bad simile either, for it was one of those genuine Thrigsby days when air and earth seemed to be saturated with water, dirty water at that, and its pale inhabitants had the wan stare of fish in an aquarium, with something also of their odd alacrity. Mr. Leslie knew almost everybody and had continually to be taking off his hat. 'He's like a pump,' thought Tom."

This is about as close as Mr. Cannan ever comes to Thrigsby. He sees it casually and with a hostile humor. You feel its wanness, its coldness, its stolidity. You understand why Jamie, who tried to be a poet, and an actor, and a dramatic critic, and a lover, got no higher than just missing the managership of the bank and marrying a pretty girl who was disappointed in him only because he missed it. But all this stated in a review means almost as much as if you had read it in the detail of the novel. It is a pity that this sort of thing happened, and the fact that it was allowed to happen means much to us now. Yet we knew it all before.

The true places in the book emerge when Mr. Cannan is interested in the people he likes—Scots, mostly. Jamie is talking to his beloved sister, Mary, on a visit from the Continent.

"'It is a shame,' she said. 'I am having the life you ought to have had.' 'I think not,' said Jamie. 'I'd be using my fists on your philosophers before I'd been with them a week. Instead of that I use my brains on dear, good, foolish living men and that's nigh as stupid.'—'Oh! Jamie,' cried Mary, sitting up in her bed and looking like a lively mischievous little girl. 'If only I could be your wife, I'd make something of you.'—'What would you make of me, wee Mary?'—'The dearest, oddest, kindest man in all the world,' said she.—'You're a funny little sparrow,' he said, stooping over her and kissing her, 'but the English don't want dear, kind men any more. Poor Shelley's dead and they have forgotten Toby Shandy.'—'O! O! O!' cried Mary, 'I wouldn't waste you on the dirty English. I'd have all Edinburgh running after you like the children after the pied piper of Hamelin.'—'Then,' replied Jamie, 'you don't know me, for, if they did, then I'd turn and spit in their faces. I hate a crowd.'"

Mary's trouble is Mr. Cannan's trouble. He hates the dirty English and he wants Jamie in Edinburgh. Therefore, in spite of much solid effort, he can't write of Thrigsby except with a tepid, unrevealing distaste such as any of us might have felt.

G. S.

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