

What a temptation it must have been in a land of Pashas and pilaf, bazaars and hubble-bubbles, veiled ladies and dark secrets to splash on "local color" with a heavy brush! To this temptation almost all writers on exotic subjects—not merely literary parvenus like Robert Hichens, who must display their riches, but even the Lotis and the Conrads—more or less succumb. But though "atmosphere" is, one suspects, his passion, Mr. Dwight has had the restraint to give just that whiff of musk, that echo of a dripping fountain, that glint of white sails on a blue sea which leave one unsatisfied and insatiate. It is by suggestion, allusion, that he evokes for us modern Stamboul.

The literary device which he most often employs to give his reader perspective is the one usually adopted by Maupassant and Conrad in dealing with remote material: the introduction of a foreign raconteur. This intermediary, who in the present volume is our author himself under a thin diplomatic disguise, gives us a silken thread of familiar observation and reflection to lead us safely through the mazy ways of Pera, "Under the Arch," and back into that marvellous "Mill Valley." In "Mortmain" and "For the Faith" the necessary distance is obtained by telling the story from the point of view of the hero, the innocent and gullible American missionary. Of this tribe Mr. Dwight seems to have much pleasant ironic knowledge; and "The Regicide," which hits off the diplomatic innocent and his wife, is equally detached—it might have been written by a more kindly Mrs. Gerould. But the stories where the reader's approach is direct are not less successful though they are certainly more Arabian-Nightish—"In the Pasha's Garden," "His Beatitude," "The House of the Giraffe."

Mr. Dwight is much too modest about his powers. He specifically disclaims, in his preface, the gift of invention. "Not one of these stories could really be called mine. Several of them I put on paper almost exactly as they were told me. Most of them were put together out of odd bits of experience and gossip." These easy remarks raise interesting and complicated literary questions. Evidently, Mr. Dwight is not a Poe, nor yet a Jules Verne. Evidently, too, he is not the popular magazine writer who sits down with a formula at 9 A. M. and produces the romance of an hour, by lunch. Probably he is not a Conrad or Kipling in stature—we need more evidence on that point. But—to take a Turkish example—one has only to compare "Haremlik," which claims to be fact, with "Stamboul Nights," which avows itself fiction, to recognize the value, for the basic fabric of a story, of honest "experience." "Invention" seems to be just what initiates Demetra Vaka's pictures of the modern harem. What makes Conrad's tropics better than Mrs. Gerould's? Largely the "odd bits of experience," of which the former are so artfully woven together, the things nobody knows but the man who has actually seen and felt them, the things which everybody yet hungers to hear, and recognizes as essential truth.

Experience, however, isn't everything. Mr. Dwight will have to own himself a master of one of the most difficult literary forms. "Situation, suspense, climax"—he knows how to use them all, and can make the broken heart of a bathman and the death of a camel-driver quite as significant as the downfall of a Nousret Pasha. One is glad it was given him to live in Constantinople before the Germans and the Russians began to grab for it. For "Sumurun" was made in Germany and "Schéhérazade" in Petrograd; and there is something about the crude colors and violent

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gestures of these spectacular productions which suggests that the ancient and corrupt and subtle city revealed in "Stamboul Nights" is on the way to losing its personality.

## War Books

*Under Three Flags: With the Red Cross in Belgium, France and Serbia, by St. Clair Livingston and Ingelberg Stern. London: Macmillan and Co. 3/6 net.*

*My Home in the Field of Honour, by Frances Wilson Huard, with drawings by Charles Huard. New York: George H. Doran. \$1.35 net.*

WAR books are developing categories: the historical and critical, propaganda, books by regular correspondents, impressions by nurses and casual observers, and accounts by soldiers themselves. "Under Three Flags" comes under the third division, a series of vivid vignettes in some two hundred small pages. There are anecdotes and anecdotes, but these in this tiny volume have for the most part the fibre of episodes which were lived through rather than collected because of their dramatic or picturesque quality. Both authors—Miss Livingston, an Englishwoman, Miss Stern-Hansen, a Norwegian—were nurses; naturally their sympathies and their alertness focused on the wounded and starving. When the war is over and the respective nations return to their respective cultures undoubtedly the heroism before pain so universally exhibited in the war will be the field of investigation studied by some careful German with a psychological ax to grind. He will find his material

in casual little volumes like "Under Three Flags." But he will hardly relish such a story as that about the German general who came up to the two women at Charleroi, where they were foolishly impetuous enough to cry "Vive la France!" and whispered hastily, his face white with anger, "France is dead! and the death of England is as good as accomplished." Through the dark clouds of misery and suffering and shattered limbs gleam one or two bars of genuine hope. The rehabilitation of Serbia after the first ravages of the typhus—a short two months was all that had elapsed between the authors' visits—makes rational the faith that all Europe may recuperate, at least on its sheer physical side of orderliness and smiling pastures, much more rapidly than one had dared to believe.

"When we arrived at Nisch the changes became still more amazing. Two months ago the station had been a cold, windy, painful spot, standing in an ocean of mud. There had been wounded soldiers everywhere, in every stage of misery, and shivering refugees, with scarcely a rag on their backs. There had been starving children, and mothers carrying in their arms infants wrapped in newspapers to keep them from freezing to death. . . . Now, instead of mud, there were gravel paths all around the station; green creepers grew up the freshly painted pillars, and the station was resplendent in several coats of fresh paint. The paths had been disinfected with liquid lime. The shivering refugees had disappeared, and the soldiers were now sheltered in tents in an adjoining field, instead of lying on the paving stones with a crutch for a pillow."

Compact and often stirring, the episodes and pictures in this characteristic contribution to the already staggering war literature inevitably lose in continuity and singleness of impression. No human identities run through the book to bind it into one unfolding drama; not even the authors'. The whole effect is of spottiness. "Under Three Flags" is a disjointed and in some ways an unskilful book, yet it has twice the pull and interest possessed by the meagre glibness and hollow emotionalism of many of its competitors.

Certainly that lack of human continuity is not a defect of "My Home in the Field of Honor." Mrs. Huard has a chateau at Villiers near the Marne river, sixty miles from Paris, and she is justly proud of it. She introduces us to her domestic arrangements, her servants, and her animals, even to her method of making jam. The story she tells is a simple one—of staying on grimly at Villiers and attending the refugees as they came through, stumbling and heart-broken, until the next village retreated, of hurrying back towards Paris, hoping every hour for the great news of the German defeat which finally came, of returning home across the ghastly battlefields and the crumpled little villages, of finding her chateau pillaged and inconceivably dirtied by the Germans, of restoring it to some sort of decency and transforming it into the hospital which it still is. Mrs. Huard saw little of the actual battle of the Marne, she never frequented diplomatic circles, and she never squinted at the tangled barb-wire of the enemy's lines through a trench-periscope. Yet there are moments of genuine poignancy in her book, and interspersed in her narrative of tired horses and frightened domestics are bits of insight into the reaction of the French provincials to the war, all the more valuable because unconscious. Their sturdiness of character matches well the German spirit of unity. It is an amiably discursive and gossipy sort of book, but I suppose one gets a quicker and keener sense of the reality of the war from this unassuming narrative of a quiet home invaded and then restored than from the journalist's favorite massing of casualty lists and summoning of all his superlatives to impress upon you

the horror of what has come conventionally to be known as "a hurricane of steel and fire."  
H. S.

## The New Romanticism

*A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, by W. Walton Claridge. London: John Murray. 2 vols. \$12.*

IF there be any in this country unimaginative enough to believe that the age of romance has passed away, let him forthwith read Mr. Claridge's book. If we have no Columbus, if there is no New World in which the balance even of the Western hemisphere may be redressed, the history of West African adventure records patient and determined travail unsurpassed in the annals of British colonization. It is not a story of passionate excitement that Mr. Claridge has to tell. Rather is he concerned with the methods of commercial propagandism, the constant imitations of petty tribal wars, the slow assumption by Great Britain of suzerainty, the progress of research in tropical medicine. Yet there is nothing commonplace in the record. Here are the bare materials of pioneer adventure. The book seems to me one of the best explanations I have seen of the success of the British in tropical colonization.

The best of colonial officials, it seems obvious enough, are those who search out for themselves a real acquaintance with the culture of the country; the worst are those who go through their life in a place like India in the implicit belief that Buddha is God and Kipling is his prophet. For half of the difficulty in colonial administration comes from the contact with strange things behind which the mind of the white man, whether English or American or French or German, finds it difficult to penetrate. Sir George Grey became a great governor of New Zealand, as Sir Hugh Clifford has been a great governor of the Gold Coast, simply because they have been at pains to know the character of the human material with which they were concerned. The same thing has been well exemplified in our own experience by the wisdom and insight of men like Wolcott Pitkin in Porto Rico and Winfred Denison in the Philippines. The failure of German colonization has been exactly the absence of such endeavor. Their colonial governors have acted on the basic assumption that the African mind was simply the German mind in its infancy and have attempted, accordingly, to force it into the Procustes' bed of a German mentality which was essentially different from the African mind. Such implicit reliance upon what Mr. Graham Wallas has finely called "the optimistic ethnology of Exeter Hall," the belief that with education and the missionary the Ethiopian can change all but his skin, is one of the most arrant absurdities of which the human mind is capable. Men such as those to whom I have referred are refreshingly free from this humiliation. They constitute very largely the real justification of colonial enterprise.

This is, in fact, the constructive lesson Mr. Claridge's book has to teach. He makes it clear that the way in which British dominion in West Africa has been extended is not as a means to unintelligent Imperialism but as the one certain way in which the peaceful extension of commerce might be secured. He shows in interesting fashion the way in which there has grown up a sense of responsibility to savage races. That is not to say that the white traders have not often enough been blind and greedy and cruel. That is not even to say that a consistently progressive policy has been adopted by Downing Street. A willingness, for example, to accept an alliance with tribes practis-