

espouses a small city, the union is not necessarily a happy one.

But somewhat significantly the farmer turns up again at the end of the volume. Significant also is the fact that Frank Yaw, the farmer in question, with his passionate love of the soil and his quiet belief that "tillage is ancient, honorable and indispensable,"—is curiously unlike the other farmers of the chronicle, who on the whole managed to make a pretty bad impression. Their everlasting complaints against the Octopus that makes money dear and farm products cheap, the railroads and their extortionate freight charges, the unfair tariffs, the corrupt politicians and the wicked speculators have pretty much exhausted our patience. When everyone else is radiant, the farmer alone appears dissatisfied and subversive.

Frank Yaw is clearly exceptional. Frank "turned the sandy loam, watched the gentle kine in the pasture, the golden apples and painted peaches in the orchard, listened to the chanticleer, the lament of the dove, the globuled notes from meadow larks. . . ." He knew that some must build and others delve; showed no resentment when the rewards for delving fell far below the rewards for building and never suspected that the joyful builders depended upon the fruits of his fourteen to sixteen hours of happy toil per diem for a very large measure of their pleasure and profit.

There are times when we cannot help feeling that Frank is very nearly too good to be true; moments in other words when we suspect that Frank is almost exactly the townsman's ideal of what a farmer should be.

Why is Frank Yaw chosen as typical, when all the evidence has gone to show that the average farmer is quite a different kind of person? Why this anxiety to show us the town through the eyes of Frank, the Happy Farmer?

Mr. Murdock is not a realist. He has given a lively, heroic and affectionate account of one of the most significant and bewildering phenomena of the latter half of the nineteenth century in the United States, and that should suffice for most of us. For we, the "folks," are not realists either. We much prefer the genial and fabulous legend of western development to Mr. Veblen's sordid and forbidding analyses. Our spirits revive again when we gratefully hail Frank Yaw as the typical farmer of the Middle West. How admirably he maintains the tradition of the kindly and indomitable American character!

These are the things we like to believe about ourselves, and if there can be said to be any real difference between the East and the West, perhaps it is the fact that in the Mississippi Basin there exists a greater capacity for whole-hearted and undismayed belief.

EDITH PARSONS MORGAN.

The Origin of Man

The Origin of Man and of his Superstitions, by Carveth Read, M. A. Cambridge University Press.

THIS is a curious book. It is composed of two halves very unequal in both length and subject-matter and united by the slenderest of connecting threads. The first two chapters outline Mr. Read's conception of how man evolved from an anthropoid form. The factor he stresses in this context is the adoption of a flesh diet with the correlated development of the hunting pack. This determinant is undoubtedly worth considering, but while the author may have come to develop his hypothesis by quite

independent thinking it is not by any means new to science, for the very same idea was developed five years ago by Dr. William K. Gregory in his *Studies on the Evolution of the Primates*.

The major portion of the volume is devoted to a discussion of such cultural phenomena as Animism, Magic and Totemism. It is not very bad as such treatises by outsiders go, neither is it very good. Mr. Read has studied those general works and monographs which all British speculators on such matters study and his interpretations have the customary ring. Some of his suggestions are sensible enough, as when he explains that a shamanistic performance may function as a genuine theatrical entertainment from the spectators' point of view; or when he hesitates to accept the incredibly ridiculous hypothesis that the Australian elders evolved their matrimonial classes by "deliberate excogitation." On the other hand, the stock concepts of the older evolutionist philosophy are applied with a naïveté that shocks the critical reader. "A tribe that produces poets" we read, "has an advantage in the struggle for life; and, accordingly, a strain of poet-blood is bred in the tribe, and shows itself in a certain number of youths in each generation."

At the very end Mr. Read indulges in some reflections on the future; but some paragraphs of lugubrious cater-wauling lead to no positive suggestion but the incidental mention of eugenics and the doubtless accurate remark that "he who lives longest will see most." The book is clearly and, apart from a few extravagancies of terminology, even well written, but altogether I see no adequate reason for its existence. In the language of the Bab Ballads,

"No characteristic trait has it
Of any distinctive kind."

ROBERT H. LOWIE.

Selected Current Books

Mr. Waddington of Wyck, by May Sinclair. Macmillan.

A comedic novel in which a pompous male has the centre of the stage.

To Let, by John Galsworthy. Scribners.

The Forsytes again. "With this volume, the Forsyte Saga comes to an end."

A London Mosaic, by W. L. George and Philippe Forbes-Robertson. Stokes.

Satirical survey, with illustrations in color and tint.

A Correction

In the notice of Mr. Sisley Huddleston in the last number he should have been described as correspondent of *The New Statesman* and *Westminster Gazette* instead of *The Nation*.

Contributors

JOHN MACY was formerly literary editor of the *Boston Herald*. He is the author of *The Life of Poe*, *The Spirit of American Literature* and *Socialism in America*.

J. E. KIRKPATRICK is a professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan.

MOISSAYE J. OLGIN, a Russian writer who came to America a few years ago, has recently returned from a six months' visit to Russia. He is the author of *The Soul of the Russian Revolution* and *A Guide to Russian Literature (1820-1917)*.