

sure, he says, that the diplomatic situation did not get ahead of the naval situation. He issued secret instructions to the British fleets on July 27th; on the 31st he secured secret assurances, through Lord Birkenhead, of the cooperation of the Conservative party leaders; and the next day, when Germany declared war on Russia, the British Navy Lord hastened to 10 Downing Street "by the garden gate" and informed Asquith and Grey that he "intended instantly to mobilize the Fleet notwithstanding the Cabinet decision. . . . I went back to the Admiralty and gave forthwith the order to mobilize. We had no legal authority."

The English cabinet, temporarily at least, failed to function in the world crisis. "No decision had been taken," testifies Churchill, "to send an ultimatum to Germany or to declare war upon Germany, still less to send an army to France. These supreme decisions were never taken at any Cabinet. They were compelled by the force of events, and rest on the authority of the Prime Minister." Mr. Asquith was nominally a dictator; the real dictators were Mr. Churchill and the Navy.

Mr. Churchill championed acts in 1914-1915, which, if they had emanated from Teutons, would have savored of ruthlessness. Before Belgium was invaded and before England had declared war, he instructed the British fleet in the Mediterranean to attack the German warship Goeben if the latter assailed French transports. After the declaration of war he urged the Cabinet to sanction the violation of Italian neutrality so that his ships might destroy the Goeben. Subsequently he advocated high-handed measures in order to force Holland to open the Scheldt.

Many are the controversies which will rage about Mr. Churchill's disclosures and confessions. Some authorities will think he is right, and others that he is wrong, in what he did at Antwerp or on the eve of the naval engagement off the Chilean coast or in connection with defences against submarines or air raids. But to the present reviewer one fact about this important book transcends all others: it bespeaks the mind of a militarist, and militarists are as dangerous now as they were from 1911 to 1914.

CARLTON J. H. HAYES.

## New Novels

*Round the Corner* by Gilbert Cannan. New York: Thomas Seltzer. \$2.00.

FROM Mr. Cannan's preface I learn that this novel, first published in England ten or eleven years ago, is the second in his "long cycle of industrial novels," the other being *Little Brother*, *Three Sons* and *a Mother*, *The Stucco House*, *Time and Eternity*, and *Annette and Bennett*, which last he finished "in the spring of 1922 in Switzerland, high up in the mountains." My guess would be, with *Round the Corner* as the only cistern I have to draw inferences from, that Mr. Cannan is still conscientious, industrious, not incompetent, rather conventionally unconventional. My guess would be that he has read and assimilated Samuel Butler, Mr. Shaw, Mr. Bennett, or other dissolvents of romanticism, of hard-and-fast moral codes, of sentimentality. *Round the Corner's* ideal reader will be somebody who hasn't yet drunk of these fountains of subversion. Yet some things in the book would be what they are no matter what Mr. Cannan had

read. His liking for kindness and country life, for example, and his conviction that the life lived by wage-earners in an industrial Lancashire city is unendurable and must be bettered. In a "little preface" reprinted from the first English edition of this novel he wrote: "Being of such a strange temper and vision that when I aim my pen at a man I am as likely as not to hit his grandfather . . ." These words carry me up to the source of the faint irritation to which Mr. Cannan moves me. Neither in vision nor in temper is he at all strange. On the contrary. But *Round the Corner*, as he reminds us, "is a young book." Here's hoping he has grown stranger in the past ten years.

*Challenge*, by V. Sackville-West. New York: The George H. Doran Company. \$2.00.

STOP, look, listen to Miss Sackville-West's prose, which is worth it. Julian Davenant, her young hero, is landing on the island of Aphros, where the natives, of mixed Greek and Italian blood, have come together by the shore, eager to learn whether he will lead them in revolt against Herakleion, a modern independent city-state seven or eight miles off on the Greek seaboard. A woman's voice breaks the silence of the crowd by ringing out the word *Liberator*. And then: "Clear, sudden, and resonant, the cry vibrated and hung upon echo, so that the mind followed it, when it was no more heard, round the island coast, where it ran up into the rocky creeks, and entered upon the breeze into the huts of goat-herds on the hill." Is it good? It is no end good, and Miss Sackville-West shows us picture after picture in these sentences of hers, each with a shape and a cadence of its own. From the mainland she shows us Aphros and the smaller islands "set in the white flashes of their foam," she takes us there in a small boat and then on into the hilly interior. Colors of hill and vineyard, of flowers and native costumes, absurd garish rooms in Herakleion houses, these things she shows us while giving us a firm grasp of topography, while keeping always before our eyes the light and the motion of Greek seas. Her story, unfortunately, whether you take it as mere adventure or as revelation of human nature turned inside out by crisis, is miles below her pictures. Her young heroine—"spoiled, exquisite, mettlesome, elusive, tantalising"—is the novel-reader's very old friend. Her hero would be quite as novel-worn, I suspect, if he were not so vague. But there isn't any doubt that Miss Sackville-West can write excellent English.

*Jessup*, by Newton Fuessle. New York: Boni & Liveright. \$2.00.

THE heroine's mother died soon after giving birth to her in a St. Louis brothel. Her father isn't known or suspected. More than once while reading her story I feared the worst, viz., that Jessup would by accident or a series of accidents discover her father. She never does. She meets him, to be sure, but neither of the two comes near guessing their relation, although Jessup feels something she doesn't identify as the voice of blood. My gratitude to Mr. Fuessle for this his abstinence is explicable by reference to a useful aesthetic law: The coincidence that we dread and escape reconciles us to the lesser coincidence that we don't escape and hadn't dreaded. Another law of

aesthetics: The danger of heredity is that it may unload upon the novelist data he doesn't need. So here. Had Jessup's parents been X and Y, instead of a prostitute and a portrait painter, I should have found her story just as credible. I should have been just as ready to believe (a) in her success as a designer of theatrical costumes and (b) in her fear that loss of her virtue might prove a total loss. Nor is her otiose father worth knowing on his own account: "In appearance he was distinguished: his figure was tall and spare and he carried himself with a dignity closely related to disdain. His face was tanned and his straight nose and long slender cheeks bore the severe stamp of good breeding. In dress he was precise. There was a constrained elasticity about his movements, and he seemed surrounded by an invisible atmosphere of coolness, distance, and authority. He looked forbidding and remote. There was none of the flair of the Latin Quarter about him." Yes, Mr. Fuessle does write like that, but his book is better than the shopworn words he mostly uses. In Jessup's final interview with Ivan Banning she carries herself with a dignity which, though it may be closely related to disdain, is more closely related to good sense.

*Restoration*, by Ethel Sidgwick. Boston: Small, Maynard & Company. \$2.50.

MANY greater novelists must envy Miss Sidgwick the art with which she conceals the fact that she is inventing her characters, seems rather to be discovering merely, so well do all of them except the children keep up the appearance of having existed on their own before she happened to make their acquaintance. Having dropped us into an English country house, where we are strangers, nobody knows better than Miss Sidgwick how to put us wise to its inmates, its guests, its neighbors, and to the lie of the social land round about. Mistakes we make while getting the hang of things, much as we might if the country house were real, mistakes which it amuses us to recognize and to correct. This time it is a post-war house, a neighborhood where old fortunes have died and new fortunes grown up, where old estates have changed hands, where the war has given just a touch of newness to the young people's manner and way of looking at this world. We hear of young men who died in the war, the teller of the story lost his right hand in the war, the war has given Miss Sidgwick's hero about as much restlessness as her heroine likes. Agreeably stimulating is our uncertainty whether this hero has set his heart on the right woman, lively our hope that he will, solid our satisfaction when sure that he has. In fact *Restoration* is everywhere agreeable and lively. On every page Miss Sidgwick lets fly little arrows of observation, each of which hits its mark deftly, each of which penetrates as deep as the archer meant it to, say half an inch or less. Perhaps there is a little monotony in the brisk succession of neat short clauses, but there is none in the author's method of seeing and painting, where we can distinguish friendliness, satire, tolerance, mockery; several shades of each. I can't deny that she has admitted three or four hearts of gold among her dramatis personae—Copeland, his sister, Achurch, Ellen Ware—but except in Achurch's case I somehow don't mind the anachronism. To no taste of mine is this alert, civilized, neat, acute book, in which lovers of Miss Jane Austen will hear of something to their advantage, the worse for being wound round a core of old-fashioned love story.

*The Fascinating Stranger and Other Stories*, by Booth Tarkington. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company. \$2.00.

BY making each of these thirteen stories very thin Mr. Tarkington keeps it rather short. By telling each of them very slowly he makes it rather long. Seldom, as Mr. Charles Whibley said of Thackeray, does he use a sentence when a page will do as well. Here we Americans look pretty much as millions of us like to imagine ourselves. In this small-town world which we inhabit our lives can't go so far astray that a little good will and management and common sense won't set them straight. Both journeys and stayings-at-home end in lovers' meetings. Shrewd and humorous young men are easily embarrassed when in love, and blush rather freely. Children, except in the story called *The Only Child*, are not the nuisances such children would be in a less flattered world. Mr. Tarkington knows how to take this world, which is any good magazine-reader's world, and to leave his own mark on it. He accomplishes this by noticing things—the angle at which we tilt our office chairs—the geographical regions in which we say "stop by"—our gregariousness, our neighborliness, our humor and near-humor, our exaggerations and our understatements. His mark is the mark of a kindly humorist, who would regard a determination not to flatter us as one of the forms of taking himself too seriously. Besides, there are kinds of flattery he doesn't go in for. He never encourages, for example, our worship of success. And two or three times in these stories we meet, unexpectedly, Mr. Tarkington's other pair of eyes, no less friendly, no keener, more sophisticated, almost sceptical, a little tired, and can't help wondering, what this pair would have noticed if their owner had chosen to keep them open. Now and then we come across a phrase so concise and so happy that we wonder how its maker can be content to waste elsewhere, which is almost everywhere, such a lot of space.

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## The Pathology of Poe

*Edgar A. Poe: A Psychopathic Study*, by John W. Robertson, M.D. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.50.

IN the early days of American literature, criticism was criticism. During the pistol-toting forties, a literary man expressed his opinion of another literary man without the flavorless urbanity which emasculates the modern article. Those were the red-blooded days of the *Broadway Journal* and the *Evening Mirror* when gentlemen called each other plagiarist and calumniator and haled each other into court in frequent libel actions, and when Edgar Allan Poe could write, "Mr. Bryant is not *all* fool. Mr. Willis is not *quite* an ass. Mr. Longfellow *will* steal, but perhaps he cannot help it, and it must not be denied that nil tetegit quod non ornavit."

But when Poe's obituary appeared in the *New York Tribune* containing the remark that his death might startle many but "that few would be grieved by it," this seemed to be going further than even the customary bad manners of the times permitted. A multitude of champions sprang to Poe's defence, and the Reverend Mr. Griswold who had written the obituary felt obliged to justify his remark in the full length *Memoir* which he published later. He was not a man to be forced from the moralistic ground that he had taken, that Poe's career was "full of instruction