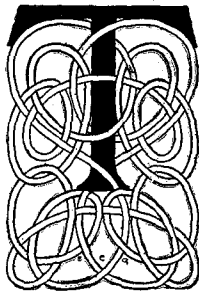


S. WEIR MITCHELL

A SHEAF OF AUTUMN FICTION

BY AGNES REPPLIER



HE autumn novels, though numerous enough to daunt the bravest heart, are few and good when compared with the mighty flood-tide of fiction which every spring submerges a romance-loving world. This is probably due to the fact that summer reading is supposed to consist exclusively of stories, and that the traveling American provides with a liberality which defies discrimination for the beguilement of his ocean voyage. But Christmas is the goal which pub-

lishers now are keeping well in view, and, for some reason hitherto undefined, people do not buy novels for Christmas presents. They prefer "Poems of Sentiment and Reflection," or "Church Doors in Normandy," or "The Secret Heart of China," by a gentleman who has spent six weeks in Peking.

Perhaps this is the reason that so many autumn novels have a permanent value. They are designed, not for a steamer chair, but for a library shelf, and can dare to make their appearance with the falling leaf. Mrs. Humphry Ward's "The Testing of Diana Mallory" has an assured welcome in the library, and a space already waiting for it by the side

of "Lady Rose's Daughter" and "The Marriage of William Ashe." Lovers of workmanship are grateful for Mrs. Ward's distinction of style, for her steadfast rejection of that riotous medium with which too many modern story-writers offend the educated ear, and for felicitous phrases which betray the

of manhood; for the minor characters of the book—those invaluable, unimpassioned minor characters to whom the reader turns naturally for solace—are worth a wilderness of lovers. Ferrier, Sir James Chide, Mrs. Fotheringham, Lady Lucy Marsham, Lady Niton—how admirable they all are, men and women



MRS. EDITH WHARTON

patient labor of the file. Lovers of circumstance have a pardonable weakness for a novelist who knows the world whereof she writes, and who reveals in every detail an intimate acquaintance with the complexities of social and political life. It matters little that Mrs. Ward has permitted herself an old-fashioned heroine, rather too good and beautiful for credence, and has balanced her with a hero lacking the honorable qualities

of a world full of purpose, and of misdirected energy! Lady Lucy especially is drawn with a touch as gentle as it is merciless, and with a clear understanding of a painful truth—that it is often a woman ripe in all the cardinal virtues, and impregnably well-intentioned, who plays havoc with the nobler things of life. The scene in which Ferrier reads her Dean Church's sermons, by way of solacing a selfishness too profound to be

recognizable, has an ironic quality carefully sustained. For the sermons *do* solace, without any moral correspondence on the listener's part, and without rending for a moment the impervious tissues of her soul.

Remote from the sharp insistencies of modern life, "The Red City," by Dr.

townspeople more affectionately portrayed. Nobody has been forgotten, nothing has been overlooked. The book is a gallery of dead and gone Philadelphians; and there is not a family whose ancestors lived in the Red City during Washington's second administration who cannot find their names upon its pages—



MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

Weir Mitchell, has all the tranquil charm which belongs by right to old letters and faded diaries. Its title is eminently felicitous, for Philadelphia is the true heroine of the tale—Philadelphia in her pleasant youth, when the return of Congress lent her importance, and her complacent gayety was held to pass all bounds of soberness. Never was there a more accurate portrait of town and townspeople, and never were town and

a circumstance which all right-minded descendants mightily enjoy. The utmost care has been lavished upon every detail—upon the streets, the lanes, the inns, the lodging-houses, the very books taken from the old Loganian Library, which are in truth those which that best of colonial diarists, Elizabeth Drinker, confesses to carrying from its shelves. A slender thread of fiction holds the chapters together, and some of the characters

do a little fighting and love-making on their own account; but for the most part they are content to live the tranquil Philadelphia life, drinking the best of Madeira, eating soft-shell crabs and reed-birds, smoking Maryland tobacco, going dutifully to Christ Church where they can see Washington say his prayers, buying tickets for college lotteries, and giving doles to the poor debtors in the

After all, why should good writers be so keen to tell a story? There is no need; and if Mr. Booth Tarkington had only kept his story out of "The Guest of Quesnay," he might have given us a delightful book. The setting of his tale leaves nothing to be desired. We are equally happy in the Paris streets, watching ladies more beautiful than well behaved, and in the Normandy inn,



JOHN FOX

Sixth Street jail. What if a few fools capered on Market Street around a *bonnet rouge*, and a few ruffians perpetrated coarse outrages in taverns? What if the yellow fever turned the pleasant city into a charnel-house? These things taught their hard lessons, and passed away; but the spirit of Philadelphia survived—tenacious, balanced, unemotional—a spirit crystallized by Dr. Mitchell into a book full of charm and feeling, into a novel which is less a novel than a panorama of a brick-built town.

listening to the chatter of the tourists, counting the brilliant mendacities of the waiter, and distinguishing the amateur artist from the professional by his readiness to pay his bill. Why should Mr. Tarkington have projected into these pleasant byways a series of circumstances which Sindbad the Sailor would have hesitated—on the score of improbability—to describe? Is the world more athirst for fiction than it was in Sindbad's day, or has it grown more credulous, or is it possible that motor-cars and concussions

of the brain are destined to reform mankind?

"The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," by Mr. John Fox, has for *its* setting a frontier line between Kentucky and Virginia, where no sane person would willingly abide. The tendency of the mountaineer to shoot at sight is strengthened in this particular district by an ancient and honorable feud between

flag to victory, and was sitting in the lower House, helping to make laws for the rest of the State."

To this inspiring neighborhood comes a vigorous young mining engineer, John Hale, full of hope and courage, and blissfully ignorant of the terrible forces around him. That he should be caught and carried far in the eddy is inevitable, and that he should tempt fate in the



BOOTH TARKINGTON

the clans of Tolliver and Falin, which feud has its origin in the laughter of one little Kentuckian, many years before, at sight of another little Kentuckian's patched breeches. As a consequence of this ill-timed risibility, generations of Tollivers and Falins have murdered each other with alacrity, and the whole countryside has been embroiled in strife. "In the last race for legislature, political issues were submerged, and the feud was the sole concern. A Tolliver had carried that boy's trouser patch like a

person of a little mountain girl is perhaps inevitable also. Nevertheless it is hard to forgive him for sweeping June Tolliver—a passionate young savage—off to school and civilization, whence she emerges in silk stockings and French shoes, with the glorious contralto voice common, alas! to all heroines, and a taste for such shockingly bad pictures as "Enfin Seul." The uncivilized mountaineer is—in fiction at least—the finer article; and Mr. Fox's ruffians are magnificent. Pious, too, occasionally, like

fighting Cameronians, and as sure of Heaven's support. "I've al'ays laid out my enemies," observes old Judd Tolliver conclusively. "The Lord's been on my side, an' I gits a better Christian every year."

Most autumnal of all the autumn fiction is Mrs. Wharton's last volume of stories, "The Hermit and the Wild Woman." It has the chill of winter in its pages, and is best read by firelight, when the room is still, when the delicate perfection of the work makes its just appeal to an alert and impartial reader, and when he is prepared to accept the ironies of life as a fair substitute for its illusions. Occasionally, as in "The Last Asset," an illusion is nursed into fragile permanence, and left blooming tenderly as "one more testimony to life's indefatigable renewals, to nature's secret of drawing fragrance from corruption." But, for the most part, the stories are clear-sighted expositions of man's signal failures—not titanic failures, investing ruin with dignity, but ordinary, every-day

failures, which come within reach of us all. The soul, as Sir Thomas Browne reminds us, may be "foully iniquated" at a very low rate, and a man may go cheaply to perdition.

"The Hermit and the Wild Woman," which, strangely enough, gives its title to the volume, has nothing in common with the other tales, being an exquisitely written sketch of mediæval sanctity regarded from a modern point of view. The mediæval point of view, which is necessary for a clear understanding of the situation, eludes our twentieth-century searchlights. We cannot stand on the brink of a current and feel its force. Of the beauty of the story, of the brilliancy of the book, there can be no denial. Sentences cut like gems, inimitable descriptions of people and places—the Ambrose house in Seventeenth Street is worthy of Balzac—a firm and delicate handling of motives, and a vein of irony, remote from humor, but no less illuminating—these things mean the mastery of fiction.

THE MIND AND THE BODY

SOME BOOKS ON HEALING BY SUGGESTION

BY H. ADDINGTON BRUCE



THE publication during the past year of a score and more non-technical volumes on psychotherapeutics, or the science of healing by suggestion, is striking evidence of the growth of popular interest in the subject. Much of this interest is doubtless mere curiosity, but for the most part it unquestionably represents a sincere desire for knowledge, and for knowledge that may be turned to practical account. It is also significant as indicating a wholesome reaction against the materialistic tendencies of the past few generations—for psychotherapeutics, with its basic conception of the power of mind over

matter, is nothing if not anti-materialistic.

And, in a strict sense, it is nothing new. Its practice has been definitely traced back as far as the time of the ancient Egyptians. But, as developed to-day, it possesses many novel aspects, some of which are extremely baffling and bewildering. Roughly speaking, it has progressed along two lines, one of which is distinctly religious, while the other is distinctly scientific. On the scientific side—as represented by investigators of the type of A. A. Liébeault, J. M. Charcot, and Pierre Janet in Europe, and William James, Morton Prince, and Boris Sidis in America—the advance has been slow and cautious, but certain. It is