

THE BOOK TABLE: DEVOTED TO BOOKS AND THEIR MAKERS

THE BARNETTS OF TOYNBEE HALL¹

BY PHILIP WHITWELL WILSON

Correspondent of the London Daily News

THROUGHOUT England, and to some extent in the United States, "the Barnetts of Toynbee Hall" have made their name a household word, and no tablet in Westminster Abbey has ever been more finely earned than Sir John Frampton's simple memorial to "the Canon," whose motto was "Fear not to sow because of the birds." It was bold of Mrs. Barnett to write this two-volume life both of her husband and of herself at the very crisis of the world war, but the biography, so vivacious and refreshing in its sometimes ruthless candor, has rapidly taken its place with Morley's "Life of Gladstone" and Stanley's "Dr. Arnold of Rugby" as a great document, descriptive of the era which ended so abruptly in August, 1914. This record is at once a delightful narrative and an indispensable authority on social reform in Britain.

Like Ruskin, the Barnetts, husband and wife, were born and bred among the *bourgeoisie*. Blessed with moderate yet ample private means, they could travel, enjoy excellent holidays, and entertain, and the Canon used to say of his various institutions, "They are all built on my wife's teatable." Yet deliberately the Barnetts abandoned a fashionable West End parish for Whitechapel in those dark days when Whitechapel was famous for "Jack the Ripper" and other criminals. Others have chosen life among the poor as ascetics, adopting the coarse food and dress of their chosen neighbors. With profounder wisdom, the Barnetts shared instead of sacrificing their pleasures. In the words of his friend Mr. Yates, the Canon would have said, "I refuse to be too busy in improving other people's lives to live my own properly." The gift which he brought to Whitechapel was thus not more money. "Wisdom," he once said to me, "consists in giving people *what they don't want*." Hence, though himself color-blind, he established for the workers the first and still the finest art gallery for loaned pictures to be found in England; and though himself devoid of ear for music, he introduced the noblest composers to the humblest toilers. Nothing but the best for the poor was his principle, and there is in the pages of this book a revealing anecdote telling how Mrs. Barnett refused the less valuable paintings in a private collection, insisting that the gems be lent, or none at all.

In this respect for the poor there was something instinctively American. The hospitality of the Barnetts was simple and dignified, but its particular feature was the presence at the same table or in the same drawing-room of Cabinet Ministers, undergraduates from Oxford and Cambridge, labor leaders, and casual wage-earners. Hence you have in these volumes a rich harvest of reminiscences, whether of the maid who swung the baby of her mistress around her head because she felt mad and the baby came handiest, or of Herbert Spencer visiting the Nile and remarking, "The color of the water hardly vouches for its hygienic properties." In the '70s Jowett, of Balliol, was at the

height of his fame. He sent forth scores of graduates—Viscount Grey among them—stamped with the seal of certain success. Such were the men from whom the Barnetts exacted toll of time and talents. Barnett's own reward was limited to a long-delayed canonry in Westminster Abbey, where he was sub-dean when he died. His later years were one long refusal of bishoprics. But in placing his men he was an adept. The Cabinet, the departments of state, the cathedrals, were full of his nominees. Everywhere he could find a helper when help was wanted.

Toynbee Hall thus became the first and standard university settlement. When I lived there, Whitechapel had changed from a criminal haunt to the home of eager, upward-striving Judaism. It was there that sixteen years ago I took lessons at first hand in what is now called Bolshevism. For months I argued and wrestled with the very type which has blossomed into Lenin and Trotsky. In what they now say there is little that I did not then hear. Surrounded by cosmopolitan aliens, it was therefore fortunate that the Barnetts should belong to the Broad Church.

What the Barnetts attempted and what they achieved arose directly out of their experience. In the administration of poor laws their methods worked a revolution. They stopped outdoor relief, holding that such doles did no good—that more should be given, or nothing at all. They were pioneers in the organization of charity, hitherto a mere sporadic, and they believed, as do Americans, that most ills are cured by individual effort. To the poor such news seemed at first to be hard, and the Barnetts had their windows broken. But gradually it became apparent that the motive underlying refusals of help in money was reverence for the individual thus thrown upon his resources. In rescuing women from an evil existence the Barnetts were courageous as lions. It was to them also that children owed the Country Holiday Fund which sent tens of thousands of youngsters every year into the villages, where cottage folk entertained town folk, under arrangements that are really amazing in their efficiency and sometimes for their revelation of the effect of this new life upon the children of the slums. "The grasshopper is a very light-some insect," observed one London urchin in his letters, while another discovered that "the cow has large thoughtful eyes and is an oblong animal."

Against barrack orphanages for children Mrs. Barnett waged incessant war. Whether supported by rates or local taxes or by subscription, she would have none of them. The child without a home should be given a home; and owing to this argument multitudes of boys and girls—no longer called "paupers," but "state children"—were brought up by foster mothers and fathers, side by side with children in normal circumstances.

To thoughtful Americans this Life will be an inspiration because it deals with small beginnings of great changes. Here are ample reasons for the unrest which is sweeping to-day over Britain. The Barnetts and the many who were included in

their movements did much, but, as we now see, not enough. Not only in Whitechapel, but in many of our cities, housing is still sadly defective and slum clearances are too slowly made. Such clearances as are being made may be said to be the fruit of the Barnetts' agitation of forty years ago. Like the Cadburys of Birmingham, they were convinced that no rebirth of society is possible until city dwellers are assured of the home beautiful and a garden. This splendid vision ripened until, in the last dozen years, the Hampstead Garden Suburb was established—what was my own home stands as one of the first houses—and this great model township, with its institute and churches and clubs, will be for all time a contribution to domestic history. Here Mrs. Barnett rather than her husband was the active pioneer, and no woman could desire a more satisfying monument. It is worth noting that the leading architect, Lutyens, was selected to design the new Delhi, in India.

Americans will find in these volumes many familiar personalities with others humbler and less familiar though of a human value. But the particular claim of the biography to serious study lies in the application which it affords of art and idealism and religion to the humdrum duty of going about doing good.

Let me conclude with a picture of the Canon from the pen of his wife. In telling her love story she thus describes her future husband:

He dressed very badly, generally obtaining his clothes by employing out-of-work tailors in the district. He always wore a tall silk hat which, as he had purchased it by post, never fitted, and so was usually tilted over his forehead or rammed on at the back of his head. His umbrella was a byword, and he always bought his black cotton gloves two or three sizes too large. He approved of wearing a flannel shirt, and united it to a white collar with a black silk ready-made tie.

When my turn came as an obscure disciple to know "the Canon," he had been groomed considerably. As a young curate he may have seemed shy to the high-spirited girl whom he wooed and won, but in later years he was an accomplished talker and an irresistible listener. He had many great men among his friends. There was not one of them who did not feel, at his death, that in vision and in service he had been greater than themselves.

THE NEW BOOKS

FICTION

Beach of Dreams (The). By H. D. Vere Stacpoole. The John Lane Company, New York.

A romance of the adventures of a refined woman wrecked with two common sailors on desolate Kerguelen. One dies by accident, the other she is forced to kill in self-defense. Then, when she is dying of loneliness and despair, comes another common sailor, ignorant but with the simple trustworthiness of an honest man, who saves her and cares for her. The story ends as it should, which is *not* in marriage.

Bells of San Juan (The). By Jackson Gregory. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

In this story of the Southwest may be found action, exciting incident, and thrill. It is a pleasure to add that there are also and equally evident good writing, the true spirit of romance, and fine local color. The

¹Canon Barnett: His Life, Work, and Friends. By his wife, H. O. Barnett, C.B.E. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

young woman doctor, the manly young sheriff, and the old Mexican who loves and rings the bells of the Mission for tragic deaths and joyous weddings are true, living characters.

Bulldog Carney. By W. A. Fraser. The George H. Doran Company, New York.

A tale of the Canadian Wild West with a fighting, law-breaking hero who has some of the traits of a modern Robin Hood. "Bulldog" is a good character and his exploits make exciting reading. The Canadian Mounted Police are sketched in a spirited way.

Damsel in Distress (A). By Pelham Grenville Wodehouse. The George H. Doran Company, New York.

Extremely amusing. The story is comedy, but borders on burlesque. The contrasts between English and American slang and colloquialism are clever and the two types are consistently rendered. Dialogue and incident are continuously entertaining.

Disturbing Charm (The). By Berta Ruck. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

Queer complications of heart affairs follow the use of a love charm at a French pleasure resort. An American girl who believes in its efficacy experiments on several people to assure herself, and it works, but usually on just the wrong persons. An odd fancy, mingling the modern and the miraculous.

Drowned Gold. By Roy Norton. Illustrated. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

This tale includes a singular search for treasure-trove in the form of gold lying in the hold of a vessel sunk by a submarine in the great war. It is carried out by a converted submarine with marvelous lights and attachments, invented by a friend of the young American captain whose life story and adventures form the main story. The narrative and dialogue would stand compression a little, but plot and incident are notably good.

Gibson Upright (The). By Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson. Doubleday, Page & Co., Garden City.

"The Gibson Upright" had its stage try-out in Indianapolis in July. The Indianapolis critics, if we remember correctly, were not favorably impressed with the play as an acting drama. But this telling satire on modern industrial conditions is certainly delightful to read. Briefly, the play tells the story of a young piano manufacturer who, disgusted with his inability to satisfy his Bolshevistically inclined employees, turns his whole business over to them. The resulting complication in which his employees find themselves enmeshed and his own love for a fascinating and very radical piano tester furnish the theme of the plot.

Girl in the Mirror (The). By Elizabeth Jordan. The Century Company, New York.

This novel is not a sequel to the author's "Wings of Youth," published last year, though some of the characters in that novel appear in the present volume. The scene of the "Girl in the Mirror" is the New York theatrical world. The characters move about with a sort of nervous breathlessness at movie speed, and the story has, as have many movies, a startlingly dramatic conclusion.

Heritage. By V. Sackville-West. The George H. Doran Company, New York.

This is, we believe, the author's first novel. It presents two contrasting atmospheres, English and Spanish. There is much psychology and much realism in this remarkable book—almost too much at times, the fastidious reader may think.

Nevertheless he will, we think, be justifiably absorbed in following to its conclusion the author's study of the two elemental strains of the heroine's heritage.

Hunkins. By Samuel G. Blythe. The George H. Doran Company, New York.

How a returned officer made the soldiers back from the great war an element in the political life of a boss-ridden town is the theme of Mr. Blythe's novel. There are exciting incidents.

Mare Nostrum (Our Sea). By Vicente Blasco Ibañez. Translated from the Spanish by Charlotte Brewster Jordan. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

Any book by Ibañez is sure to command attention. Probably no author of recent times has more suddenly leaped into popularity than he. "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" accomplished that. Yet, now that the war is over, as one reads that war novel he is conscious that it has certain defects which, if more emphasized in other books, might be deterrents towards their reading. This is true, we think, with regard to the Spanish author's latest publication, "Mare Nostrum." The peoples of Spain, France, and Italy call the Mediterranean by this affectionate Latin title. When we want to be instructed about the surface of that sea, the currents of its waters, the habits of its fish, or the wonders of its depths, we are more apt to go to a cyclopædia. Here we have it in a novel. Much guide-book information seems to have been "lugged in"—not perhaps that the author wished to "pad" his pages or to force upon us instruction in oceanography, but that, like Victor Hugo, he would rest from his labors as a novelist to indulge in some professorial chapters. They are all interesting chapters of course, but they keep "Mare Nostrum" from being a good romance of adventure. The daring Spanish sailor and the German adventuress are almost smothered in them. And yet, despite this, the book is well worth while, because of its page after page of pure, exquisite intensity of feeling.

Messenger (The). By Elizabeth Robins. The Century Company, New York.

A German woman spy who has made herself a beloved companion in an English Cabinet Minister's family is the striking figure in this novel by the author of "The Magnetic North." Incidentally the clever methods of the English Secret Service are described. The story has literary quality as well as an exciting war plot.

Mirabelle of Pampeluna. By Colette Yver. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

This translation of a charming little French war romance parallels the patriotic devotion of two sober, steady French young men of the middle class, with the chivalry and gallantry of the heroes of an ancient tome recording the deeds of the knights devoted to Mirabelle.

Our Casualty. By G. A. Birmingham. The George H. Doran Company, New York.

Canon Hannay finds subjects for his always engaging humor even in incidents of Ireland's Easter Day Rebellion as well as in the oddities of training and camp life in the Great War, in which he served as a chaplain. The stories have pith and point.

Rain-Coat Girl (The). By Jennette Lee. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

A cheerful, clear-headed girl stenographer in trying to make herself happy and contented develops a great gift for making others get more out of life. She is tremendously efficient and equally human. Without patronage or superior airs she coaxes a

whole village to get busy, starts gardens and dances and laundries, and even makes her poet-lover practical and helpful. The story is good fun as well as sound inspiration.

Saul. By Corinne Lowe. The James A. McCann Company, New York.

An intensive study of the garment workers' business, from the overworked sewing-machine operator up to the magnates of the trade. Needless to say, the characters are Jews. So, in a way, we have as subject-matter the people and the life treated with such rich humor in Montague Glass's "Potash and Perlmutter" stories. In "Saul" the treatment is more serious, but not without entertaining quality. The novel has excellent workmanship and well deserves reading.

Secret of the Tower (The). By Anthony Hope. D. Appleton & Co., New York.

This is the first novel written by Anthony Hope since the beginning of the war in 1914. It is agreeable to find that the novelist has not lost the old-time thrill of "The Prisoner of Zenda." The present story is a romantic mystery novel and the scene is laid in post-war England.

Sherry. By George Barr McCutcheon. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

A dissipated but at heart honorable young man turns his back to booze and without whining or despair just "cuts it out," goes to work cheerfully, forgets that he is a college graduate and once had a fortune, starts in as a day laborer, and in the end makes a place for himself in life and love.

Siamese Cat (The). By Henry Milner Rideout. Duffield & Co., New York.

A queer cat bought as a pet in the East by a charming American girl becomes, for a curious, secret reason, the center of intrigue, plot, and murder. Mr. Rideout knows his East and tells a story with Kipling-like rendering of color and with rapid-fire action and excitement.

Simon. By J. Storer Clouston. The George H. Doran Company, New York.

A clever and readable detective story, with a live and amusing character (not a very common thing in crime stories) in the person of the Englishman lately returned from the wilds of America who insists on solving a mystery that others would willingly ignore.

Sisters. By Kathleen Norris. Illustrated. Doubleday, Page & Co., Garden City.

A story of the California woods. The affection of the two sisters for their father and the love of each for the man of her choice in a way conflict, but do not extinguish one another. There is a mingling of external romance and spiritual feeling in the tale which give it individuality and character.

Spriggles. By E. Lawrence Dudley. D. Appleton & Co., New York.

A little ragamuffin runs away and then is taken away, and then new adventures come and we find ourselves in an atmosphere of art and love and the background of Paris. It is a far cry from the slum world which the hero once knew—a vivacious hero and one of much physical charm. He does not quite "strike twelve," however. He would have had more of a chance of doing so if the story had been less complicated. Its lively dialogue will doubtless attract numerous readers.

Storm in a Teacup. By Eden Phillpotts. The Macmillan Company, New York.

This is lighter in tone than some of Mr. Phillpotts's novels. The highly pla-