

# THE BOOK TABLE

## THE CHILDREN OF THE SLAVES

BY EDMUND CRANFORD WILLCOX

THE other day I got into a motor bus to go from one small Southern town to another. The bus had four transverse rows of three seats each. I took the last vacant seat in the third row. The fourth row was vacant, but a respectable, well-dressed colored man stood near. The bus was about to start and the colored man stepped in. "Ah, ha!" I said to myself; "here is where the Negro gets the best end of the Jim Crow plan, for we are crowded and he has a whole row of seats to himself." But wait a minute; two white lads drew near, looked at the bus, and talked to the starter; they wanted to go, too. The starter scratched his head and then addressed Mr. Negro. In the most friendly and genial way he said: "Say, old fellow, I don't see how we can handle you this trip, unless you stand on the running-board and hold on." And with equal good nature and a wide smile our colored passenger replied, "Sure! All I want is to get there." So white dignity and the law of race separation were satisfied; the two white boys had the three seats to themselves, the Negro "got there" all right, and there wasn't a bit of ill feeling.

Now this trivial incident is a symbol. "Say it with a smile" applies to race questions as to many others. In the North we often see an unhappy-looking Negro sitting in a trolley car while white men stand up uncomfortably rather than take a vacant seat beside the Negro. In the South, socially speaking, the laws of separation are known and, on the whole, are carried out with good feeling. Both in the North and in the South most intelligent people, including many Negro leaders, believe that separate schools, churches, and places of amusement are desirable, wherever practicable, for both races. The corollary is that, if the Negro is to be treated separately, he should be treated fairly—given proper and comfortable accommodations and incentives to live cleanly and to be self-respecting. One doesn't often hear nowadays the "Do you want your daughter to marry a Negro?" which used to be the retort when Northerners pleaded that the Negro should be taught and made into a good citizen. Practically the social question is settling itself.

But in other respects the true answer to the race question is in that very growth of good feeling and tolerance of which I spoke at the beginning. Time and a sense of justice will heal the scars made by hatred and contempt.

It is one of the faults of Stephen Graham's book, "The Soul of John Brown"<sup>1</sup> (published in England under a much better title, "The Children of Slaves"), that it puts too much emphasis

<sup>1</sup>The Soul of John Brown. By Stephen Graham. The Macmillan Company, New York.

on the hateful side of things. To be sure, Mr. Graham does recognize that there is a sentiment among the best people of both races for friendliness and growth. Thus one colored banker told him that the Negro must win freedom, that "there is only one thing that can bring him respect, and that is achievement." And another said, "It would be better for Negroes to build their own libraries—we don't wish to intrude where we are not wanted." And

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Mr. Graham reports with approval the forming of committees, half white, half colored, to inquire into social strife and see what can be done for life and freedom. And he avers: "The maximum of persecution of the Negro in recent years does not equal the misery of slavery. Even if all the lynchings and burnings and humiliations and disabilities be put together, they do not add up to one year of servitude. . . . They [the Negroes] are still progressing to an ever fuller freedom."

Yet, on the whole, the picture he paints is black and horrifying. One need not question his accuracy, nor doubt his assertion that a lust for cruelty has shown itself in some places where torture and horrors unspeakable have occurred, nor deny that such race riots as those in Washington and Chicago are danger signals not to be ignored. But he lays so much stress on the dark side that one might turn with profit to Booker Washington's "Up from Slavery" (first published, I remember, in your columns), or to the splendid

records of work done at Hampton and Tuskegee, or to the startling statistics as to the gains of the black race in business achievement, in order to get a fair balance-sheet of gains and losses.

Stephen Graham has a picturesque personality. His book on Russia and his account of his experiences in the Great War as "A Private in the Guards" aroused controversy, but no one denied their interest. If it is true, as I have seen stated lately, that he held that the soul of Russia was born through oppression and that *therefore* the Russians would always love their Czar, he certainly missed fire badly. Points in the present book have been questioned as to fact. But it is intensely interesting (and curious, too) to see the record of an Englishman's observation and his talks with whites and blacks in a journey for that express purpose up and down our Southern States. We are more impressed by what he saw and heard than by his arguments. Sometimes, indeed, the latter are based on lack of knowledge; as where he laments that the Constitution of the United States does not allow the Southern States to put an educational restriction on suffrage. Had he known better, he might have strengthened his own indictment of unfairness, for the last thing on earth that most Southern States would wish for would be an educational restriction that would actually disfranchise ignorant whites as well as ignorant Negroes.

Mr. Graham was started on his travels over the once Slave States by an idea that came to him while marching toward Cologne in the British army, namely, that he would like to follow Sherman's "march to the sea" as a sort of tradition-seeking tramp. This he did, with experiences that make a capital chapter.

I should be loth to accept all of Mr. Graham's comments on the condition and prospects of the Negro in America, but one of them is strong and clear. He says: "There remains just one obvious solution, and that is in distinct and parallel development, equality before the law, and mutual understanding and tolerance."

From the race question of to-day one turns to the race question more than half a century ago in Margaret Lynn's "Free Soil."<sup>2</sup> It is well to be reminded of the terrible struggle in Kansas that decided forever that its soil should be free soil. The battle of Ossawatimie is now little but a name to most of us, but it meant a great deal. Here we have the story of a sturdy, liberty-loving New England settler and his brave wife, who went West to fight for liberty and to build up a freedom-loving community that should defy the curse of slavery. As fiction pure and simple the novel has no great art, but it has historical reality and wide human sym-

<sup>2</sup>Free Soil. By Margaret Lynn. The Macmillan Company, New York.

pathy. As a sketch of Western living conditions in early days the book is also satisfying.

## THE NEW BOOKS

### FICTION

#### DEAD MAN'S PLACK AND AN OLD THORN.

By W. H. Hudson. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

Mr. Hudson is a master-stylist as well as a naturalist. Here he enters a new field; he gives us a sort of vision or visualization of a little Saxon drama that is supposed to take place in Hampshire a thousand years ago. There is a simple and plaintive charm in the narrative.

**MEHITABLE.** By Katharine Adams. The Macmillan Company, New York.

All the Mehitables we ever knew personally were called Hetty. But not this one. She is dignified, sweet, and gracious. Her school life near Paris, her trips to other lands, and her fine love story form a superior kind of story for older girls. The tale has its culmination in the outbreak of the Great War.

**TAKE IT FROM DAD.** By George G. Livermore. The Macmillan Company, New York.

A new kind of boys' book—and a good kind, too. These letters from "Dad" to his boy at Exeter are full of fun. If they preach at all, they do it in a roundabout and jovial way, and with sly hits and digs as from one fellow to another. They are spiced with slang and salted with worldly experience.

### BIOGRAPHY

#### PERSONAL ASPECTS OF JANE AUSTEN.

By Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh. Illustrated. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

Not important as a contribution to literary history, but decidedly interesting because of its new material and its personal side-lights on Miss Austen's home life and social friendships.

**ULYSSES S. GRANT: HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.** By Hamlin Garland. The Macmillan Company, New York.

We are glad to see a new edition of this work, first published about a quarter of a century ago. It is one of the best anecdotal biographies ever published—anecdotal, that is, in the sense that wherever incident, anecdote, and dialogue can bring out the personality of the greatest Union generals that method is here adopted. We commend the book especially for boys and young men.

### HISTORY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

#### LETTERS FROM THE KAISER TO THE CZAR.

Copied and Brought from Russia by Isaac Don Levine. Illustrated. The Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York.

This volume comprises letters found in the Czar's private correspondence after his death. They were written in English, the language always used by William II and Nicholas II in conversation or correspondence. They are wholly distinct from the "Willy-Nicky" correspondence published three years ago,

which was composed of telegrams only. They are only half satisfactory as correspondence because there are no letters of reply from the Czar to the Kaiser. It would be interesting to know whether these letters are now in Holland, guarded by the ex-Emperor. Regrettably incomplete as the present volume is, no book, we think, could present a greater revelation of the Kaiser's character. Here in his own letters he is a jumble of opposed qualities—lofty, petty; thoroughgoing, superficial; simple, theatrical; modern, mediæval. Mediæval certainly was his obsession concerning the divine right of kings. As he said in one of these letters: "We Christian kings and emperors have one holy duty imposed on us by heaven, that is to uphold the principle '*von Gottes Gnaden*.'" On the historical side the volume is valuable because it exposes the hidden machinery of European international policies during the decade preceding the war. In this period William II was continually intriguing against England. He was willing even to include France as an ally if with Russia and Austria he could form the strongest league against England. He had another and more secret motive—to remove the menace of Russia herself. In order to be free of the dread of what might come from the East the Emperor was glad to sow suspicion of other Powers in Russia, so that the Russian Government would be kept well occupied with those Powers and would not realize the increasing commercial, and consequently political, conquest gradually being made by Germany to the east. Finally, this allusion to America is interesting:

It is very essential that America should not feel threatened by our agreement [the secret treaty between Germany and Russia]. Roosevelt, as I know, owing to the innate American dislike to all colored races, has no special partiality for Japan, although England does her utmost to work up American feeling in favor of the Japanese. Besides, the Americans have a clear perception of the indisputable fact that a powerful Japanese Empire is a lasting danger to the American Philippines.

Such a book should have had an index.

**VENIZELLOS.** By Herbert Adams Gibbons. Illustrated. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

The Greek elections make timely every such worth-while comment as this on the career of Venizelos, a statesman of commanding importance and one quite out of proportion to his country's size and prestige. Venizelos did more than merely to restore his native Crete to Greece, to reorganize the internal affairs of Greece and provide her with a Constitution. He was capable of doing more than merely to double her area and population. As Mr. Gibbons points out, Venizelos might have led his countrymen to Constantinople itself, and thus have realized their dream of centuries to occupy again the old

Byzantium. But, in any event, his action, as Mr. Gibbons affirms, has been a death thrust to the integrity of the Turkish Empire. The great Greek's successful formation of the Balkan Federation brought Turkey in Europe to its all but extinction in 1912. When the war began, in 1914, Venizelos saw his country's opportunity to put Turkey entirely out of business in Europe and to redeem the part of Asia Minor inhabited by Greeks. But the Powers felt it unnecessary to "play up" Greece (to use Mr. Gibbons's expressive phrase). As their control of the Mediterranean put Greece at their mercy, a more important duty seemed then to be the task of keeping Bulgaria neutral, thus isolating Turkey. Nor, as we learn in these pages, were the Allies above taking advantage of the friendliness of Venizelos to "play up" Bulgaria at the expense of Greece and Serbia alike. The Powers did more. As Mr. Gibbons shows, in the secret treaty of 1915 with Italy they awarded to her the purely Greek islands of the Dodecanese. Yet Venizelos persisted in planning for the day to come when, after her entry into the conflict on the Entente side, Greece would be in a position to stand up for what was due to Greater Greece. The conflict between the pro-Ententists and pro-Germans, led respectively by Venizelos and King Constantine, lasted throughout the war and since. During the first two years events favored the King. After that and until the elections of the other day they favored Venizelos. Now they are again favoring the King. But the Greater Greece of Venizelos, though temporarily defeated, will win again.

Mr. Gibbons, who came into close personal contact with Venizelos, also tells us of the splendid personal influence of that leader in strengthening the morale of the Greeks so that they appeared as liberators to the Macedonians and Serbians. Greek intervention under Venizelos on the Macedonian front had the same effect, says Mr. Gibbons, as did the intervention of the Americans on the fronts in France. German morale was broken by the appearance of a new army which gave to the enemy of the Germans an unquestioned superiority of numbers; Bulgarian morale was broken by the unexpected Greek resurrection. It is appropriate that we should be reminded of this at a time when the great Cretan has had to flee from Athens. Who can read the glowing accounts of a titanic work and feel that any other leader could come within a hundredth part of doing what he has done? Whether he is in power or not, the fame of Venizelos is secure.

### WAR BOOKS

**WAR DAYS IN BRITTANY.** By Elsie Deming Jarves. The Saturday Night Press, Detroit.

This handsome volume comprises an account of what two Americans resident in Brittany were able to do during the war. It also contains references to the work which the American Red Cross and the "Y" did in that province.