

THE ANONYMOUS NEW YORK BANKER SEEN ON HUDSON



THERE is a banker down in Wall Street whose evening newspaper sometimes becomes an unnoticed sketch-book. A member of The Outlook's staff discovered the banker's *penchant* for sketching faces, and persuaded him to let us prove to readers of The Outlook that New York banking circles are not wholly engrossed with deposits, loans, collateral, compound interest, and foreign exchange. Last May we published a group of his sketches of commuters. The present group shows types observed on a Hudson River ferry-boat. Other examples of sketches by the financier will appear in The Outlook from time to time.

This is not Samuel Gompers, although it looks something like him. Perhaps he's a labor leader on his way to a big conference. Or, he might be mistaken for one of the men who own Broadway. But he undoubtedly knows what the public wants—whether his line is real estate, neckties, billboards, or women's wear



He doesn't mind living in Jersey, since the ride gives him ample time to read his paper without missing any of the news. Moreover, the Jersey side is the place to raise his family



She regards the big ocean liner with longing eyes and wonders if she will ever be lucky enough to shelve short-hand and filing cabinets for a deck-chair



He is usually first off the ferry at Hoboken and plays a resourceful game of pinochle in the smoker of the 5:50 on the Lackawanna that roars through the Oranges

TURNS HIS PENCIL LOOSE ON TYPES RIVER FERRY-BOATS



New Yorkers will recognize the restrained typography of the editorial page of the New York "Evening Post." But the lady herself doubtless favors the "Evening Journal." The anonymous banker did not say whether she was a soubrette in a musical comedy or a second-lead in a thriller



An intrepid profile whose owner might be counted on to run a hundred yards or close a sale in fast time. A profile providing unmistakable denial of the notion that they're slow in Jersey.



Pilot? Engineer? Anyway, he is one of the men who keep the ferries plying like shuttles in a loom. The stalwart structure of his face would tempt the pencil of any sketch artist



The ferry-boat is always a good place for a quiet little tête-à-tête and for a timely discussion of where to locate the romantic bungalow. The artist does not show their hands, but of course they're holding them

THE BOOK TABLE

BOOTH TARKINGTON, DRAMATIST

AN IDLE CONVERSATION BETWEEN AN INDOLENT REVIEWER
AND HIS CAPTIOUS FRIEND

BY BARRETT H. CLARK

THE Friend. I warn you, my mind is made up; but if you want to air your ideas, go ahead. However, if you intend to write a review, why not write it? You surely aren't going to use *my* ideas?

The Reviewer. No; but you offer me just enough in the way of half-way intelligent opposition to stimulate my own thoughts. Besides, I don't like the notion of sitting down and dissecting Booth Tarkington's plays.

The Friend. You agree with me, then, that they are not worth writing about! Right. His books are a different story. Now, take "Alice Adams"—

The Reviewer. I have not read "Alice Adams," and I prefer not to discuss the novels. I have been reading the three newly published plays—"Clarence," "The Country Cousin," and "Penrod,"¹ and if you will allow me to tell you about them—

The Friend. Let me look at them. Why, these are simply the prompt copies, evidently reprinted from the stage manager's scripts—

The Reviewer. Intended for production in theaters. That's what a play is. I hope I sha'n't have to make such an obvious statement in my review.

The Friend. Why didn't he publish them as books?

The Reviewer. Why not as tone-poems? Shall I never convince you that a play is a play, and that when you are privileged to read it you must always think of it as a play?

The Friend. But these are simply skeletons: dialogue and a few scraps of description—hardly literature, I should say.

The Reviewer. You must accept the conventions of the form.

The Friend. But listen to this bit of "description"—I read at random from "The Country Cousin:"

Sitting-room at Mrs. Howitt's, Centerville, Ohio. A June morning. A pleasant, homelike, incongruous interior of the eighties and nineties. Two windows, rectangular oblongs, plain (with no small panes) in back. Cream-colored shades and lace curtains.

And they say Tarkington can write! "In back!"

The Reviewer. You don't understand; that is only—

The Friend. Wait. I want to read you the description of Mrs. Howitt: "She is a gentle but rather careworn (forty-five; wears half-mourning." That's all. It reads like a telegram—

The Reviewer. But—

The Friend. I make that a night letter.

The Reviewer. The description is sufficient.

The Friend. Not for me.

The Reviewer. It is for the manager and the actress.

The Friend. But I am neither the manager nor the actress. I prefer de-



BOOTH TARKINGTON

scriptions of houses and people as the author writes them in his novels.

The Reviewer. Did you see "The Country Cousin"?

The Friend. Yes. That was different.

The Reviewer. Exactly. You are now reading the "night letter" directions, purposely laconic and to the point, that are intended merely to guide the manager and the actors. You insist on comparing a printed play with a printed novel, and you miss a delightful experience. You have a mechanical piano, haven't you?

The Friend. Yes. What has that to do with the case?

The Reviewer. You crank it, or touch the self-starter or whatever it is, and it does the rest?

The Friend. Yes.

The Reviewer. And you like it?

The Friend. Yes.

The Reviewer. I don't. I beg your pardon, but I don't like your machine. I prefer the old-fashioned work-it-yourself pianola, where I use my hands and feet—and incidentally my head. I feel I am running the show; I often used to imagine myself the conductor of a great orchestra, and to this day no one can

persuade me that my own reading of the "Ninth Symphony" is not finer than that of Nikisch. I am sure I enjoyed it more than I did any subsequent rendition of it.

The Friend. And this little chapter from your autobiography is intended to show—

The Reviewer. That my own imagination filled the gaps. The pianola roll supplied the barren notes and I the inspiration. And so it is with plays. Did you never declaim "Hamlet" to yourself in the bath-tub and imagine you were Booth? I have played a violin and thought I was Kreisler as I accompanied myself on the pianola, playing the Beethoven Violin Concerto!

The Friend. I don't imagine the neighbors thought so.

The Reviewer. I was oblivious of the neighbors—to put it politely.

The Friend. But what about Tarkington and his plays?

The Reviewer. Simply this: Take these "skeletons," as you call them, use your imagination, fancy yourself the stage director, the actors, the entire audience, and be the whole show yourself. That's practically what you do when you read a novel. Only, I beg you, when you read a play, forget that there is such a thing as a novel. And I venture to suggest, if you will try the experiment in a sympathetic mood, that you will find more in some plays than you do in a trilogy of novels.

The Friend. Your customary exaggeration.

The Reviewer. I speak the literal truth. For example, compare "Antony and Cleopatra"—or "Cæsar and Cleopatra," to make the test a little fairer—with, well, with "Nicholas Nickleby." Do you miss the descriptions in Shakespeare? And as for Shaw, you get a small novel together with the play.

The Friend. Booth Tarkington is not Shakespeare, nor even Shaw.

The Reviewer. But they have one thing in common: they are all dramatists. For the sake of argument, I maintain that what Booth Tarkington omits in the way of detailed description serves only to stimulate the imagination.

The Friend. Tell me, why do writers take such infinite trouble to describe people and places?

The Reviewer. Sometimes the description is beautiful in itself; sometimes, unfortunately, it indicates intellectual laziness; and sometimes, of course, it takes the place of actual dialogue. The effective play tells a story by means of action, supplemented by speech, and, since the play is usually concerned with critical moments in the lives of people, the dramatist is forced to present his characters more vividly, more saliently, more dramatically, than is the novelist.

The Friend. Would you say that

¹Samuel French, New York.