

# The Book Table

## Locke's Latest<sup>1</sup>

Reviewed by R. D. TOWNSEND

A NEW story by W. J. Locke is something of an event in the fiction-reading world. The eagerness with which his novels continue to be welcomed by a wide circle of readers is the more remarkable when we consider the amount of his output. If we are not mistaken, "The Coming of Amos" rounds out a full score of Locke's novels which have been reviewed in this department. It could hardly be expected that all these stories should be even in quality and interest, but Mr. Locke does maintain with uniform success his story-telling facility and originality. The fact that readers and critics differ in choice when asked which of the Locke novels is the best shows that he can do many things well. To some, probably to the majority, "The Beloved Vagabond" appeals most strongly because of the delightful charm of the disreputable but poetical and lovable Paragot; others find equal whimsicality and greater appeal of human optimism in "Septimus" and care little that Septimus himself is entirely an improbable person because they are so charmed with his fascinating mixture of unselfishness and irresponsibility; while not a few readers of the more critical class deem "The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne" (written before "Septimus") but only brought into prominence by the remarkable success of that book) to be the most delicately wrought of all the stories and to be improved rather than injured by what may be called its good-natured cynicism.

"The Coming of Amos," to be sure, cannot be ranked with the books just named, nor probably with at least two or three of the others; but it holds the reader's attention firmly and abounds in those sudden surprises and unexpected turns that are characteristic of the author. One feels sure that Mr. Locke himself thoroughly enjoyed the writing of the first part of the story. It has urbanity, leisureliness, and allows the author through the supposed narrator, a middle-aged painter who unjustly calls himself an egotist and hedonist, to talk with charm and appreciation of things that Mr. Locke himself deeply enjoys, such as the natural beauty of the Riviera and the deepening delight of the true painter when he works for his own satisfaction.

This is the part of the book which calls out one's undiluted admiration. Not so acceptable to the critic is the complication of sensational incidents in the latter part of the book, plot-stuff which the author thought himself bound to produce in order to please those to whom the plot of a story is the whole thing. We have a perfectly conventional South American villain, a scheme of blackmail, a sudden death which was partly accident and partly just vengeance, and a singular criminal situation growing out of the sale or pledging of a pearl necklace. In other hands such a plot might be called cheap and common, but Mr. Locke deals with it in twists and turns that are all his own.

The most arresting character in the book is naturally the "hulking innocent," Amos, who bursts in upon his uncle, the elegant painter of women's portraits and an intimate of extremely fashionable and rather sporty society. This raw youth from Australia, with plenty of money, brought up by a fiercely puritanical mother, and not only unsophisticated,

but ignorant as to the ordinary manners and customs of civilized society, is as original in his way as Septimus and Paragot were in theirs. The uncle himself describes the situation in these words:

And the pure, honest, direct simplicity of Amos! It was an education in life—painful perhaps—but no education can possibly be free from the fustigatory principle—it was an education to behold him sweep away social sophistries with a wave of his ham-like hand and delve to the bedrock of mortal values.

Naturally, Amos falls fiercely and suddenly in love with the Russian princess whose portrait his uncle is painting when he first comes upon the scene. The situation is tense, underneath the surface, because the uncle is himself in love with the princess. How the rough diamond Amos was developed into a man of persistent determination and how the love situation untangles itself must not be told here. But it is safe to say that, however correct the reader may be in his guess as to the conclusion, he will be astute indeed if he foresees just how it is brought about.

## The New Books

FICTION  
**ANCIENT FIRES.** By I. A. R. Wylie. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. \$2.

An admirably told romantic tale of two men and a girl. The men are Britons, both natives of an old-fashioned English cathedral town, Stoneborough. Near by is an ancient castle, apparently lost to the Fitzroys. The boy Euan inherits the title of the long line of knights and baronets who were born there. The other boy, John Smith, comes from a family of charcoal-burners who have lived for generations on the estate. Beyond doubt he is a Fitzroy on the left side. He has inherited the beauty, wild spirits, and daring of the old race, while Euan is custodian of its more sober virtues. The strange bond of affection which holds these two, despite their contrasting natures and their rivalry in love, is skillfully brought out. How Lisbeth, too, Lisbeth the faithful and the womanly, can love them both and at first succumb to the lesser love is made credible and tolerable. The action carries us from rural England to Quetzalango, a turbulent American Republic somewhere south of Mexico, where General John Smith is a great and picturesque figure. All's

well in the end, we must feel, for that spirited anachronism John Smith, as well as for Euan and his predestined Lisbeth.

**ANDORRA.** By Isabelle Sandy. Translated from the French by Mathilde Monnier and Florence Donnell White. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. \$2.

This novel has been widely read and highly praised abroad. Kipling says he has read it more than once. Pierre Mille calls it the best novel she has read in a year. It has a fresh scene, for one thing, a new "localism." Andorra (perhaps the reader knows) is a tiny buffer-state in the Pyrenees, less than two hundred square miles in extent, and with a few thousand people. It is under the double suzerainty and protection of the Church and of France; it has no army, no written laws. It is a survival of the Middle Ages; its social system is patriarchal. All power belongs to the heads of families, and property goes down intact, not necessarily to the eldest son, but to the appointed heir. In short, here are intensified the typical conditions of peasant drama—turning upon the worship of land and of family authority. With love—the love of child and parent and of

<sup>1</sup>The Coming of Amos. By William J. Locke. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York. \$2.

man and maid—they may be called the basic materials of all drama.

But the tang or accent is fresh, and enables the story-teller to give a new force to the ancient tale of greed and mother love, passion and pride, cruelty and devotion, and stoic endurance. A little place, a little people, and in their trivial history summed up the story of all mankind.

**IN THE MIDST OF LIFE.** By Ambrose Bierce. Albert and Charles Boni, New York. \$2.

Reprint of some of the best of Bierce's stories—the Civil War tales and the stories of civilian life, mainly supernatural, grotesque, or horrible. The work of one of the foremost of American writers of short stories.

**NEW CANDIDE (THE).** By John Cournois. Boni & Liveright, New York. \$2.50.

The characters of Voltaire's satire are revived, with new names, and sent through extravagant and satirical adventures in the modern world.

**ORDEAL.** A Novel. By Dale Collins. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. \$2.50.

A good story, suggestive of "The Admirable Crichton," yet vastly different in its dramatic tenseness, psychological rather than nautical in its main interest, although full of the different moods of the sea splendidly portrayed. It is additionally remarkable as a first novel. The villainous steward, who becomes the tyrant of the little group of refined people on board the derelict when the storm and his own mischief have placed them at his mercy, and who goes mad with the sense of unaccustomed power, is a striking and unusual figure.

**ORNAMENTS IN JADE.** By Arthur Machen. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Arthur Machen is so much an artist that he cannot be anything else. With him the form always stands an unchallenged first. Then comes the emotional mood embodied in and conveyed by that form. At the tail trails the thought—the intellectual attempt to establish a tangible, reliable, guiding line of cause and effect. Sometimes this element is so vague that a too casual survey of his work may even suggest its complete absence. The question whether this limitation on his part implies a failure of some kind leads us straight back to the old dispute between the ethical and the æsthetical theories of art as a creative factor in life, and that far we cannot go here. For the time being, at least, we must accept him for what he is, regardless of all theories, namely, a craftsman of almost uncanny skill. As such he appears at all but his very best in the little group of almost unclassifiable prose studies now published under the esoteric title of "Ornaments in Jade," a thin volume, handsomely printed and auto-

A clash  
of moral  
codes



Love  
vs.  
l'amour

# The Little French Girl

By ANNE DOUGLAS SEDGWICK

**C**ANDID, fascinating and lovable, Alix, the little French girl, is sent to England in quest of the suitable marriage that her mother's indiscretions have made impossible in France. How, even there, the past lies like an abyss across her path, how she is enmeshed in the difference of social standards between the two countries, and how she finally, triumphantly, extricates herself is told in a novel that is one of the outstanding achievements of modern fiction.

\$2.00 at bookstores

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graphed by the author. In these stories, if such they can be called, he shows himself, as always, a master in the art of suggesting facts and feelings so subtle that plain words become too crude for their expression. Without appearing engaged in anything more extraordinary than a daylight walk along a crowded London street, or an aimless stroll through a dreamy wood, he carries us headlong into the realm of mystery. He cannot, it seems, write of the simplest thing without endowing it with a touch of what is more than natural—or less. And always the mystery of his suggestion is twofold in character. There is the mystery of the flesh—passion—and the mystery of the spirit—ecstasy. One finds it hard to tell which of the two preoccupies him most, and the truth of it is probably that he wishes or is forced to attempt a synthesis of both into a single, all-embracing mystery, which, if ever reached, might furnish us with the final key to the riddle of living. Perhaps it is not to be wondered that, when engaged in this pursuit, he is at times led into quests which may strike some readers as unwholesome and anything but spiritual. To put it more plainly, Machen is as much concerned with sex, in all its manifestations and aberrations, as any one of those Freudians for whom he has nothing but scorn to spare. But always he deals with it discreetly, as with a mystery, and always he seems striving to reach through the blind and noisome byways of passion to the sublime ecstasy of those "Holy, White and Shining Mysteries" which once, in a moment that became determining for all the rest of his

life, were exhibited to him on a sidewalk in Holborn.

**SHORELESS SEA (THE).** By Mollie Panter-Downes. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. \$2.

Why do reviewers love to spoil the clever writing infant by telling us that she writes like a grown-up? A British chorus has gone up over this ingenuous tale: "No handicap for age," "Quite unnecessary to judge her novel by any other standards than those applied to writers of more mature years," and so on. But the only virtue in the story is its ingenuousness. It is exactly the sort of thing a nice English girl of sixteen with a romantic fancy and an agile pen would write. It is silly, dreaming, pathetic sixteen—made articulate. There is nothing more touchingly comic in "The Young Visitors" than the episode of Guy and Deirdre and their blameless month together by the sea. Deirdre has always loved Guy, but fate has parted them. So she marries Terry (a lord), and she is awfully fond of Terry, too, but when Guy comes back into her life she can't resist him, or rather her feeling for him. "Let's be happy together for once," she cries; "do what we like, love as much as we like, and be happy—happy!" So they spend a month rapturously holding hands, after which Guy jumps off a cliff, and Deirdre, with a single gesture of abnegation, drifts easily and forever into the complaisant Terry's conjugal embrace!

**STORY OF EROS AND PSYCHE (THE).** Retold by Edward Carpenter. G. Allen & Unwin, London. \$2.

Mr. Carpenter has translated and beautifully retold from Apuleius the fa-