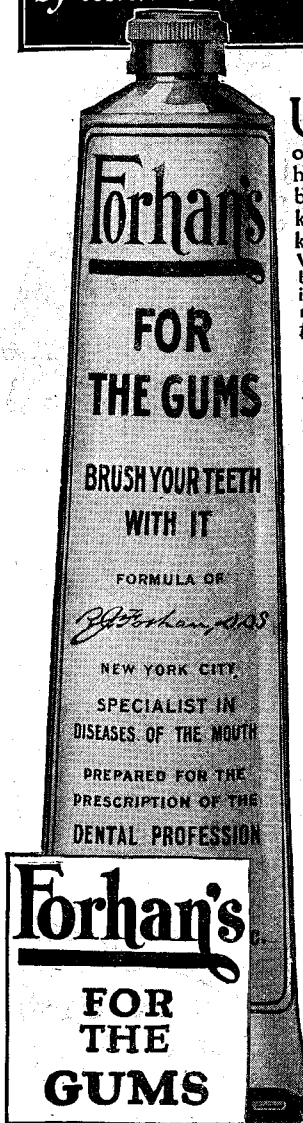


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sustain the leading parts in some of Shakespeare's plays.

In conclusion, I may say that Dr. Matthews has given us a most scholarly

book of the American theater, one that is in marked contrast to the superficial work of nearly all the commentators of to-day.

Biography

ALLEGRA. By Armistead C. Gordon. Minton, Balch & Co., New York. \$2.50.

"Allegra" (a life of Byron) is one of the many recent biographies which take their form and color from the novel. It is among the most interesting of them. Byron's life is particularly rich in material, and the author has carefully followed facts. The poet's life from the cradle to his death in Missolonghi is a tragic example of how really bad an enemy a man can be to himself. The book starts with events long before Byron's birth, and in his heritage from the dissolute line of Byrons and the "wild Gordon's of Gight" on his mother's side there is much to explain the character of the turbulent genius. A morbid consciousness of his lameness darkened his life. In his youth he was known as "Mrs. Byron's crookit deevil." At the time he met Clare Clairmont he was "young, famous, and wicked." She was the daughter of William Godwin and the widow Clairmont. Since she was young, poor, and vain, and brought up to regard marriage as a useless institution, the attentions of the picturesque poet and peer went to her head. Their love affair is a tragic story.

Byron's later treatment of her, and of their daughter Allegra, is one of the blackest marks against him. Only one chapter of the book is devoted to the brief life of the child for whom it is named. Unable to support herself and her child, Clare agreed that Allegra should go to her father. Byron placed her in a convent, where at the age of five years and three months she died, alone and neglected. Grief and remorse now lay heavily on his stormy soul.

For a few comparatively happy months preceding her death Byron, Shelley, and their friend Trelawney wandered together on the shores of the Bay of Spezzia. Then tragic events began to crowd close. Allegra's death was followed by the death of Shelley. Sick in mind and body, and bored with his latest mistress, the beautiful Countess Guiccioli, Byron prepared for the strangest adventure of a wild and powerful imagination. Picturing himself as the savior of Greece, he sailed with a small company to further the cause of the Greek insurgents. They landed at Metaxata. From here he went to Missolonghi, on the mainland, where "he exhibited remarkable business capacity and energy, and was industrious in his attention to all the details of his military duties."

On April 19, 1824, George Gordon Byron, Lord Byron of Rochdale, died at Missolonghi, as he had lived, "playing to the galleries." After his burial at Hucknall-Torkard, "the greatest tragedy of the century" was perpetrated when the manuscript of Byron's Memoirs was burned. "Allegra" takes sides with Byron's defenders. The author repudiates the horrid story of the poet's alleged relations with his half-sister, Augusta, and says, "If his errors were greater than those of ordinary men, so were his temptations and provocations."

MOHAMMED. By R. F. Dibble. The Viking Press, New York. \$3.

The new biography is no respecter of persons. Mr. Dibble applies to Mohammed the same ironic, satiric, and at times burlesque methods which he employed last year in writing of John L. Sullivan. The result is no less amusing, but it appeals us to reflect on what the faithful might think of it, in the unlikely event of its ever fall-

ing into their hands. Whether Mohammed was a profligate, a coldly calculating and atrociously barbarous hypocrite, or a humble and grateful penitent whose sole wish was to be a channel through which Allah's divine purpose might be made, are questions which Mr. Dibble poses to himself and to his readers, and "the answer forever bides," is his conclusion. Yet the image that definitely remains after the book is closed is that of a vain, sensual, quick-witted opportunist—a "grotesque, grand, preposterous, and prodigious figure." It has not, apparently, been the author's purpose to separate the charlatan from the creed.

Fiction

WAYS OF ESCAPE. By Noel Forrest. Little, Brown & Co., Boston. \$2.

In its acute analysis of character this first novel seems to indicate a mature hand. Stephen Heath's unflinching success, which his townspeople called "Heath's luck," he attributed to his own foresight and sagacity. He worked on the principle that he was "the master of his fate," but he also essayed to be master of the fate of others. With the one aim of bettering the conditions of his town, beautifying it in his capacity of architect, and establishing his children as well as he had established himself in life, one would say that he did not deserve censure. But his mistake was that he ruled the town and family. The course each of his children was to follow was chosen from his own standpoint without regard for their inclination or natural bent. Terry must go into the army, though he hated the army. Basil, with literary gifts, was trained for an architect. Rosamund, who was in love with Angus, was made to marry Gervase. Tony, to win the Saxonhurst scholarship, must be kept to his books during holidays. Mrs. Heath's one function was to be beautiful, and to this end Stephen chose the colors she looked best in and, to spare her, supervised household matters, greatly irritating her, as she possessed intelligence as well as beauty. The young Heaths, who called themselves the "Heathens," held secret conclaves to devise ways of escape, and so schooled had they become in Stephen's philosophy that each selected his own way of escape with a view to paying him in his own coin. It was heartless, and Stephen reeled at every revolt, but his pride sustained him, and he never acknowledged defeat. One could wish that he had been spared the last blow, but the story is relentlessly carried out to the end, and Paul Kenyon's dubious theory that a man must pay for ascendancy in success and happiness seemed exemplified.

Religion

MIRACLES. A Modern View. By Floyd L. Darrow. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis. \$2.50.

A thorough presentation of the improbability of lawbreaking miracles, as offered us by the Scriptures and the Church, largely by destroying their uniqueness and exhibiting the frequency of similar happenings in other quarters. Reminding us how often, for instance, the gods Castor and Pollux, mounted on their white horses, are said to have saved Roman armies in the days of the Republic, Mr. Darrow says: "I submit that this heathen miracle is just as good, no more so and no less, as any other such product of superstitious imaginations in a world-wide era of lawless

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signs and wonders." The Gospel miracles are rejected with the rest. (The author quotes richly from primitive and non-Christian religions, the apocryphal gospels, the Middle Ages, and modern faith systems in support of his thesis.) His positive creed is that miracles are not necessary and that a law-abiding universe offers a better proof of God, immortality, and moral values. The book is drastic, yet reverent and constructive; its plea to the churches for a frank adoption of its attitude is stirring; and the volume is so conveniently arranged as to do good service as a handbook on the subject.

History

A CANADIAN MANOR AND ITS SEIGNEURS, 1761-1861. By George M. Wrong. With Illustrations. The Macmillan Company of Canada, Toronto. \$7.50.

This is a reissue, in a limited edition, beautifully printed, of a book published in 1908. The manor is that of the Nairnes, at Murray Bay, on the St. Lawrence, founded in 1672 and granted to Captain John Nairne in 1761, on the expulsion of the French. With the enactment of the law of 1854 abolishing the seigniorial system, and the passing of the last of the Nairnes in 1861, came a new order, that of a simple French-Canadian village community, later to be invaded by hundreds of pleasure-seekers from far and wide. The book is a delightful record of the annals of the seignory and recreates for us a society long extinct and well-nigh forgotten. Good scholarship shows in its pages, and, no less, a charming narrative style.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS UNDER LINCOLN. By James G. Randall. D. Appleton & Co., New York. \$4.

It is a singular thing that the public has had to wait sixty years for an adequate treatment of the Constitutional issues involved in the conduct of the Civil War. This learned, judicial, and carefully executed performance answers every demand that can reasonably be made upon it. The matter of war powers, Presidential and Congressional, the defining and punishing of treason and sedition, the exercise of the draft, the relations of the Government and the States—all these and every other issue having to do with the fundamental law are treated. The book is no treatise on technicalities; it is a narration, lively and colorful, of what happened under these various categories, with a constant reference to their legalistic aspect and to the disputes that raged over each Governmental act. The Constitution was widely stretched under the pressure of a life-and-death struggle for the maintenance of the Union. There were those who would have stretched it further, and others—not a few of them sympathizers with the Confederacy—who would have stretched it not at all. Though Lincoln assumed powers greater than those assumed by any other President, and thereby came to be denounced as an "unlimited despot," a judicial review of his rulership shows that he never abused his powers, "except," as Colonel Ingersoll once said, "on the side of mercy." What the author finds as perhaps the two most significant facts of the Lincoln Administration is the wide extent of the war powers and "the manner in which the men in authority were controlled by the American people's sense of constitutional government."

DOWN THE SANTA FE TRAIL AND INTO MEXICO, 1846-1847. The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin. Edited by Stella M. Drumm. With Illustrations and Map. The Yale University Press, New Haven. \$4.

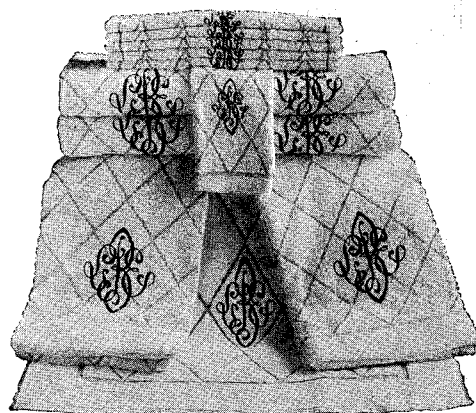
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