

The Book Table

Edited by EDMUND PEARSON

Fiction

WEST OF THE MOON. By Anna Robeson Burr. Duffield & Co., New York. \$2.50.

"West of the Moon" begins with an ingenious and interesting situation and for half its course proceeds as an agreeable and absorbing tale—improbable, to be sure, but not beyond the easy acceptance of the average reader willing to be entertained. Then it suddenly runs wild; the charm is dissipated in ridiculous complications and incredibilities, and it fails vexatiously to fulfill its earlier promise. One would have liked to like it better.

DRAGON'S BLOOD. By Romer Wilson. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. \$2.50.

Post-war Germany is not a cheerful place, but it is winning its way back to sanity and sunlight. It is not, like this extremely able and depressing study of two of its young men, all gloom. One of the two is of aristocratic, the other of peasant origin; the aristocrat is not without nobility and the capacity for happiness; the educated peasant is pitiable and repellent, intellectually at sea and spiritually debased and destroyed by a hateful mixture of egotism, abject hero-worship, and jealousy. There is also a woman, a prostitute, but capable of a pure love; it is she who precipitates tragedy between the two friends.

IN DIXIE LAND. The Purdy Press, New York. \$2.50.

A capital collection of short stories of Southern life and character not long after the Civil War. Harry Stillwell Edwards, James Lane Allen, Joel Chandler Harris, Grace King, and about a dozen other writers are represented.

THE CURSE OF THE RECKAVILES. By Walter Masterman. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. \$2.

A mystery, a murder, a family curse—what more is needed to make a super-thriller?

THE JUDGE AND TWO LIZZIES. Dorrance & Co., Philadelphia. \$2.

Elizabeth is that thing that goes and Lizzie is her driver. They take the Judge on a long touring trip, and he sees much to astound him. The fun is pretty good; like the Elizabeth, sometimes it takes you along and sometimes it doesn't.

YOUNG TOM HALL, His Heartaches and His Horses. By R. S. Surtees. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$6.

In 1851 the author of the ever-popular "Handley Cross" agreed to write a novel to appear anonymously in Harrison Ainsworth's "New Monthly Magazine." For about a year and a half chapters of the novel were published to the general satisfaction of every one, until Ainsworth thoughtlessly printed an advertisement of "Young Tom Hall, by R. S. Surtees," instead of "by the author of Handley Cross," and also wrote Surtees, saying that, much as every one enjoyed the book, he was wondering in a casual sort of way how much longer he intended to make it. Whereupon Surtees promptly exploded, and "Young Tom Hall" was left at the end of a forty-minute run (and 350 pages) standing beside a dead horse, wondering which way the hounds had gone. And that is the reason why a Surtees first edition appeared in the year 1926.

Young Tom Hall is the fat son of a provincial banker with a great deal of money who is determined to make Tom a gentleman. Young Tom buys a commission in

the yeomanry, is roundly cheated by amateur horse dealers and card players, woos the daughters of designing mammas, buys boots too tight for him, and falls off horses. As in all Surtees's novels, the plot, such as it is, does not matter; it is the hunting, the riding, the eating and drinking, and the brave haberdashery of the gentlemen that make them such good fun.

Ever since the days of Edward the Confessor the Englishman has loved to "follow a pack of hounds in pursuit of game and to cheer them with his voice." Stag hounds, drag hounds, harriers, beagles, and other hounds still have their not inconsiderable followers, but it is fox hunting that has become, not only the king of sports, but the symbol of all the brave and gallant pageantry of the past. And it has spread over the world. On the first of November silk hats and pink coats appear in Leicestershire, but also in Puritan Brookline, in Cairo, Biarritz, on the Roman Campagna, and of late among the back lots of White Plains!

Robert Smith Surtees has won a precarious place on the same shelf with his great contemporaries because he remains the finest writer of the hunting field. You remember that it was an effort to imitate the popularity of "Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities" that led Dickens to write the "Pickwick Papers," a book immeasurably superior so long as Dickens stayed away from the open country, in the stage-coaches, the law courts, inns, and bar parlors that he knew so well, for Dickens was, first and last, a confirmed Londoner, quite as uncomfortable going over the fences and hedges with Jorrocks as you or I might be.

There is some notable hunting in "Young Tom Hall." Perhaps not such a good book as "Handley Cross," it is a better one than "Jorrocks' Jaunts;" still it will be high enough praise to remember that there was something in even the latter that Dickens wanted to imitate.

28 HUMOROUS STORIES, OLD AND NEW, BY TWENTY AND EIGHT AUTHORS. Edited by Ernest Rhys and C. A. Dawson-Scott. D. Appleton & Co., New York. \$2.50.

Here is a readable collection, assembled by the untiring couple who have already presented the book stalls with "29 Love Stories by Twenty and Nine Authors," and "23 Stories" (unqualified) "by Twenty and Three Authors."

There are people, of course, who consider buying anthologies of any sort just the least bit vulgar, like signing the coupon for the complete works of William Shakespeare (with thumb index) or singing "The Rosary" in public; just as there are others ready to damn any given anthology on sight because the fellow has printed this piece of drivel by Blank and omitted that absolute masterpiece he wrote in 1906, and why should I pay two fifty to read Mr. Dooley when I've got it all at home, anyway? Still, the present collection contains stories by P. G. Wodehouse, W. W. Jacobs, "Saki" Monroe, Jerome K. Jerome, Thomas Hood, Arnold Bennett, Edward Lear, and George Ade, among others, that are particularly suitable for reading aloud. Any one already familiar with all the good stories in the twenty-eight is indeed fortunate.

GOODBYE, STRANGER. By Stella Benson. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$2.25.

Probably no one who has followed Miss Benson's work consistently has ever envied

her publishers the task of summarizing her plots. She has become so dependent upon her unique manner that a synopsis of any of her later novels is liable to sound like arrant nonsense. This is no exception. She has merely set herself again to the congenial task of inventing a crowd of fantastic yet skillfully externalized people who consistently rasp one another's nerves. Miss Benson, who, her publishers needlessly assure us, "is English," has several antipathies. The most mortal, so to speak, of these are America and Americans, as she has already shown in "The Poor Man" and "The Little World." The dislike reaches the stage of obsession in this novel. "Americans don't know how to be American—(whatever that may be)—they only know how to Americanise other people and to say Look At Us Being American. They don't decide se-cretly to think a good thing or to make a good thing—they decide to advertise a good thing. They don't determine—with a breaking heart—to rid the world of suffering—they say, I'll—Tell—the World. . . . Benefactor Is—My—Mi-hiddle—Name." And so, as Briggs says, far, far into the night. The voice may be Mrs. Cotton's, but the impulse is her creator's. There is rather too much of this ill nature in a book much of which is otherwise whimsical and sensitive.

Travel

PICTURESQUE AMERICA: ITS PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS. An illustrated volume with special articles contributed for park and playground sections and numerous selections from the works of well-known authors expressing the varied appeal of outdoors in America. Edited by John Francis Kane. Resorts and Playgrounds of America, New York. \$15.

A handsomely illustrated volume with some plates in color and many others in half-tone. There are over five hundred pages, with pictures on nearly every other page. A score of different writers have contributed articles in prose and in verse. The articles describe the forests, mountains, and great National Parks of the Pacific Northwest and of the Pacific Southwest. The Grand Canyon and Zion Canyon are described, as well as the impressive natural scenery of Colorado and Wyoming. Although through a regrettable arrangement of the book the fact does not appear in the front, the Eastern States are not neglected, and there are articles on the White Mountains, the scenery of Maine, of Florida, and of other notable sights on or near the Atlantic coast.

TOM-TOM. By John W. Vandercook. Harper & Brothers, New York. \$3.50.

This is a very interesting account of a very interesting people—namely, the Bush-negroes of Suriname (Dutch Guiana), descendants of African slaves who fled to the jungle to escape the hideous injustice of their masters and who wrested from the Dutch Government recognition of their practical autonomy. We cannot help suspecting that Mr. Vandercook is insufficiently endowed with the critical, the scientific spirit; that an excess of sympathy (to which seems to be joined a certain naïveté) has led him to bestow too unqualified praise upon the Bushnegroes. No doubt these folk have many virtues and engaging qualities, and no doubt they possess a philosophy wonderfully adapted in many regards to life in the jungle, but there are dark aspects of their character and hideous aspects of their jungle "philosophy" (their "magic," for example) toward which the

author's attitude is so fantastically sympathetic that one might suppose that one of the witch-doctors had successfully practiced on him. Such reservations made, the book is not only highly entertaining, but also a substantial contribution to our knowledge.

Essays

A LITTLE BOY'S FRIENDS. By Monroe Douglas Robinson. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$1.50.

A man's recollections of his home as a boy, and more especially of the friends of the household. These are the family and servants, the dogs and ponies and kittens which made life interesting and adventurous. There was Tim, the Irish gardener; William, a young Scottish assistant; John, the janitor of a college dormitory; Mrs. Coyle, the caretaker; and an Uncle Ted, who took the boys shooting snipe on Great South Bay. Uncle Ted had something of a reputation in later years as a hunter of bigger game than snipe.

This is an unusual book; one of tender and gentle memories. It suggests the spirit of wonder which is the *motif* of Kenneth Grahame's "The Golden Age." It describes those years when we are constantly looking upward at beings who are two or three feet taller than ourselves.

Religion


AN OUTLINE OF CHRISTIANITY. The Story of Our Civilization. In Five Vols. Vols. IV and V. With Numerous Illustrations in Color and in Black and White. Bethlehem Publishers, New York. Dodd, Mead & Co., Distributors. \$5 per vol.

We have here the completion of a vast undertaking—a new Christian apologetic. The historical and descriptive parts were left behind with Volume III. The concluding volumes are critical. Christianity is subjected to scrutiny from a multitude of angles; especially as to pretensions, function, performance, and grand relations. In Volume IV the grand headings are "Christianity and Science," "Christianity and Philosophy," "Christianity and Sociology," "Christianity and the Arts," "Christianity and Criticism," "Christianity and Faith." In Volume V the grand headings are "The Individual," "The Community," "The Nations," "The Races," "Christianity as Seen by Other Faiths," "Christianity and the Churches," "Christianity and Civilization." Under each heading are several chapters, and the variety of approach is thus seen to be very great. That variety is increased by the symposiac method, the characteristic virtues and defects of which are both in full evidence. That is, there is some very good writing, some very poor, and a good deal of indifferent quality.

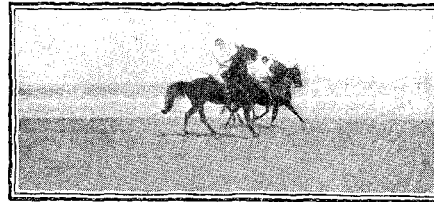
The honesty of the editorial intention is splendidly vindicated by these concluding volumes. The best chapters are those, respectively, by a Hebrew rabbi, a Moslem pundit, a Hindu ditto, and a "non-churchman." The chapter entitled "A Non-Churchman's View of the Churches," by Robert W. Bruère, is a good-tempered but absolutely devastating criticism of organized so-called Christianity. The contrast as to intellectual tone and moral breadth between those chapters and others goes far to prove that of which the "official" Christians seem insufficiently aware, the crying need of a profound intellectual and moral reawakening within the Church.

The chapters on evolution, by William North Rice, Professor Emeritus of Geology, Wesleyan University, are particularly admirable and timely. Without in any sense undermining the true bases of Christianity, not merely do they leave the Fundamentalists without a leg to stand on, but, so to speak, they deracinate the stumps.

We conclude that there is enough good

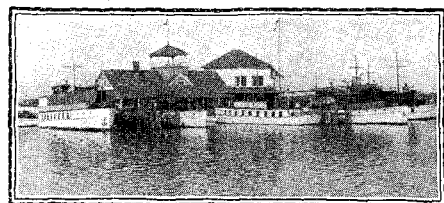


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writing to justify the two volumes; which is saying much in view of the inherent defects of the symposiac method.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CONVERSION. By G. K. Chesterton. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$1.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE APPEAL TO REASON. By Leo Ward. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$1.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF CATHOLIC POETS. Compiled by Shane Leslie. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$2.

The Roman Catholic Church wisely and from every point of view always tries to integrate its faith with the mind of the English-speaking race. In the latest additions to the "Calvert Series"—short, clear books on apologetics, edited by Hilaire Belloc—Mr. Chesterton writes of "The Church and Conversion." The author's well known buoyancy of spirit accords well with the

enthusiasm of a convert. One does not look so much for logic from such a pen as for a whole-hearted sense of the utter newness Roman Catholicism brings to its discoverer. Mr. Chesterton says that, looking back now to the time when he was of the Church of England of the Broadest School, he was unconsciously ready for the eternally waiting faith.

Leo Ward's "The Appeal to Reason" moves in that atmosphere of freedom of thought which discovered in the Roman Catholic world surprises many Protestants. His treatment of reason, human and divine, is wise, constructive, and winning, although not to the point probably of making those outside the Church accept its logical Roman Catholic conclusion.

The "Anthology of Roman Catholic Poets" will delight all who love poetry's magic words. Shane Leslie, its compiler,

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