

E. Thompson's *The Prince of Scandal* (Harper, \$4), the story of George IV, his amours and his mistresses, we cannot refrain from congratulating ourselves on the fact that we make our Presidents, who must be thirty-six years of age at the completion of the making. Grant that unproved charges have been preferred against a few of our Chief Executives, even these have been paragons of virtue in comparison with that Prince of Wales who became King of England when George III died, a man without a mind. It is an almost unbelievable tale that Miss Thompson has told; and she has told it with very superior charm. If there is not a high-grade laugh on every page, the place of these is taken by a remark that will clutch the throat, even of men, though this is primarily a woman's book. The moral lesson to be derived from it is stupendous: the English system was wrong, George IV (1762-1830) was reared to laugh when his mother died, and if he played the king at cards he remarked that he would "play the lunatic." The allusion is to the mental derangement of his father, who indirectly manipulated the surrender at Yorktown. When told by his physician that more whiskey would ruin the coat of his stomach, he replied: "Then the waistcoat of my stomach will have to do the digesting." He never saw his royal wife, Caroline von Braunschweig, until she was presented to him in the home parlor. He took one look at her and then exclaimed to the sole witness, the Minister of State, "Good Lord, give me a bottle of brandy!" After being forced to suffer the pangs of death all during the Napoleonic wars, Caroline was tried and acquitted even before she testified: "I never committed adultery but once and that was when I married George IV." The allusion is to the fact that George IV was a plain bigamist, having previously entered into the unannulled marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert. It is simply a marvelous story. And the English are so charitable and sensible; for numerically IV is rather well up the line.

ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD.

"**B**ROTHERS IN THE WEST," by Robert Raynolds (Harper, \$2.50). This is the most original novel which your reviewer has read in years. There is an atmosphere of northern epic—Irish or Scandinavian folklore, perhaps—about it, and a quality of strangeness. The story is set in the West of America, and the seventies and eighties of the last century. But neither time nor place have any special meaning to it. One feels the West in it and one feels the past, but there is no history or geography there.

The brothers are Charles and David. They wander free as the wind, catching women and rabbits with equal ease. They are bound together and bound up in one another in a brotherhood that is exalted, superhuman, heroic. As they wander they accumulate a company; Karin, whom they both love and whom David possesses, Jean Grosjean, the Frenchman from whom they have stolen her, a prairie orphan, two high-born Mexican girls, a priest, a derelict couple, a half-mad Scotchman who has killed his own son, a strange ill-assorted crew who follow them, awed and trustful. The brothers and their company found a patriarchal colony—(one thinks, here, of the Mormons) which is governed without any law but that of the forceful personalities of its two strange leaders. At last death takes Karin; and the brothers wander once more until, old men, they find the place where they were born, the goal of their wanderings.

The novel is not entirely successful. The strangeness of the brothers is felt by the reader but not quite their power. Karin, evidently intended to be the female complement of the brothers' maleness, is not completely achieved. Some of the secondary characters are too fully developed for the places they are intended to take and are dropped too suddenly from the scene. The dream atmosphere which builds up the ancient, heroic quality of the brothers is not compatible with the homely humor of some of the scenes or with the detail given to some of the minor stories.

There is material enough in the novel for two novels and of quite different types. The patriarchal theme and the brotherhood theme clash; and this reader, for one, found herself quite as much interested in the first as in the second. For that reason she thinks that Robert Raynolds, who has never before written a novel or any published book, is a great "find." His style is rather matter of fact in contrast with his strongly poetic theme and instinct. *Brothers in the West* is absorbing reading and well worth reading. It ranks with *The Grandmothers* and *The Dark Journey* among the Harper Prize Novels. Its very failures are due more to an exuberance of talent than to a lack of it, and if Raynolds is able to sustain his emotion, keep his originality and freedom, and achieve more perfect control he should do some very fine work. He has most of the qualities needed for the making of a fine romantic novelist.

FRANCES LAMONT ROBBINS.

"**S**ATURDAY NIGHT," by Thomas Moulton (Doubleday, Doran, \$2.50). The late Arnold Bennett was right when

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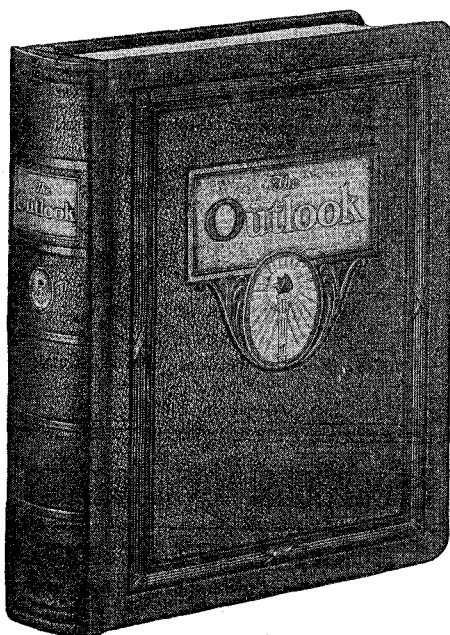
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he recognized in Mr. Moulton's first novel, *Snows over Eden*, the precursor of stronger fiction work. Admittedly a disciple of Dickens, this author depicts London streets and their denizens quite with the Dickensian flavor. Its clerks, charwomen, fish-peddlers, cinemas, pubs, concert halls, its tragedies and comedies of human life, are all obviously true to the fact and vivid in coloring. We may warn the reader, however, that he will less like the earlier chapters and the conclusion than the main body of the novel—the first, because it overwhelms us with its terrible Cockney dialect; the second because its sickening and horrible murder is almost beyond the realm of fiction writing and affects one as would a newspaper story of a Jack the Ripper type. Apart from these faults, the book is excellent; it has humor and camera-like depiction, and it both moves and stirs us as we read.

R. D. TOWNSEND.

The Week's Reading

THE WOMEN in Wagner's Life," by Julius Kapp (Knopf, \$4). There were only three women who really counted in Richard Wagner's life—his two wives (Minna Planer and Cosima Liszt) and Mathilde Wesendonk, whose highly respectable husband seems to have placidly regarded his wife's long unfaithfulness. Mathilde is said to have inspired the love music in *Tristan and Isolde*. Apart from these three, Wagner had fugitive and unimportant liaisons. Dr. Kapp has added to the early edition of this book extracts from heretofore unprinted letters mostly concerned with the temporary loves; they are neither important nor edifying. Cosima is the only woman whose name is indissolubly connected with Wagner's. All the world knows how she kept the banner of Wagner's genius to the fore for almost half a century after his death. She died in 1930 at the age of 93. There is nothing new, though much that is strange, about their early life—Cosima was the illegitimate daughter of Liszt and the wife of Hans von Buelow, who was impressario of both Liszt and Wagner. Cosima had a child by Wagner before

the divorce, and Buelow seems to have been so eager in the cause of music that he was charged with being a complaisant husband. However that may be, one asks why tell the tale over again? The history of art, music and the drama in the middle of the last century is full of such stories. Wagner's fame is assured; why dig up all this dirt anew?

R. D. TOWNSEND.

THE Colonel's Daughter," by Richard Aldington (Doubleday, Doran, \$2.50). "Why don't they turn the whole island into a 19th-century museum?" grumbles Mr. Aldington, dishing up a lusty epilogue to the England he roundly berates in his most recent novel. The Colonel's daughter, Georgie, puffy-cheeked, profoundly unaware, and blundering, plays hapless pivot to a tale of village life. For twenty-six years she has waited on the Colonel, watery-eyed relic of militarism, and on his wife, a sportin' woman who rode better to hounds in her salad days than now, on pension, she rides to market. Until the maid-of-all-work develops an indigestion which proves, after five months, to be gestation, Georgie has been spared the more fundamental aspects of life. But with Lizzie's disgrace, a strange curiosity begins to stir in Georgie's bosom. Neither cold splashings nor bicycling to town for a can of beans acts as panacea for the latent urge of her nature. So the book revolves around the quest of a penniless, unlovely, hidebound, but hopeful female for a husband. A terrorized gentleman of the cloth, a verbose sensualist, a toadying medico, and a young bull-calf from the Colonies all come under Georgie's inspection. This succession of possible victims gives Mr. Aldington scope for the juicy idiocies of the village. He lines up his characters and, with unerring instinct, selects their tenderest parts to poke. His satire, not sly or furtive, blows gustily along the pages. He patronizes the world he is describing unsparingly. But his anger is healthy and what makes the book irresistible is his underlying, unholy glee.

VIRGILIA PETERSON ROSS.

THE Virtuous Knight," by Robert Emmet Sherwood (Scribner's, \$2.50). The author of that clever satirical play, *The Road to Rome*, has written another satire, this time in the form of a historical romance. The form frequently tempts satirists but is rarely successfully used. As the details of the historical picture pile up the satire wears thin. *The Virtuous Knight* is an English Crusader in the days of Richard and Saladin. He has all the quali-

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