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By J. LUCAS-DUBRETON

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"In his natural amusement over the Pepysian goings-on with wives and other women, the author has not said all that might have been told of Pepys, the patriot and public servant, the clerk who rose to be the Secretary of the Navy and all else. We shall not, however, quarrel over that, for in J. Lucas-Dubretton's—and Mr. Stenning's book—we have a rich and convincing portrait of a pleasant sinner, showing a man so companionable that who would rather not spend an hour in his company than even a lifetime with some such improving and notoriously admirable person as, say, Dr. Isaac Watts or Mrs. Hannah More, or even Mr. Gladstone?"

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be received later.

Belles Lettres

WHAT A MAN TOLD HIS SON. By ROBERT TORRINGTON FURMAN. Les Penseurs. 1924.

This small volume contains a series of short essays written as from father to son and dealing with various phases of modern life and thought, particularly with the religious, philosophic, and economic problems underlying society. At best experience is a difficult commodity to pass on to others, especially to the young. It is almost certain to become a drug on the market unless it happens to be concealed with enough humor, charm, and individual flavor to make the reader forget that a moral is being continually pointed. One is rather too conscious of "purpose" in this small volume, though much could be said for its sincerity and the conciseness with which the different problems are stated and discussed.

Biography

PRESIDENT WITHERSPOON. By VARNUM LANSING COLLINS. Princeton University Press. 1925. 2 vols. \$7.50.

John Witherspoon, like some of the other early American college Presidents, lived on two continents, and he wove himself into Scottish Kirk polemics, New World education, and Revolutionary politics. So versatile a man makes a hard subject for the biographer, and still more for the student of character. Mr. Collins has earned credit in that being secretary of Princeton University, he has written a great deal more than simply the story of a President of that institution. There seems to have been one master trait in Witherspoon that took the lead in all his diverse activities, and that held the other components of his character much in subjection. Witherspoon was inspired by a keen Scots critical faculty that took the direction of dissent. During his earlier years, he fought the Moderate Presbyterianism of Scotland in pamphlet and pulpit. He developed a mordant gift of satire, such as survives sometimes in Puritan souls that have suppressed in themselves both the softer emotions and the franker graces of expression. Yet when the offer of the Princeton Presidency came to him, the broader kindness of the men cropped but in spite of him, and though eager to go, he deferred to the objections of a timid wife, and would have stayed in Scotland, had she not ultimately overcome her fears. Once in America, he became an advocate of Scottish colonization, an earnest partisan in Continental politics, and at the same time, a college head of the most modern type, traveling, speaking, "doing publicity," hunting funds and students. Full of affairs and full of fight, whig and member of the Continental Congress, he kept his lofty contempt for the pleasures of life; found time to write on the sinfulness of the drama; and told a lady who found no flowers in his garden: "No Madam, I have no flowers in my garden, nor in my discourse either." Mr. Collins gives us a vivid picture of him: a strait, doughty man, a dissident by nature, and yet by force of circumstances a builder when he found constructive work immediately to his hand.

ARNOLD BENNETT. By Mrs. Arnold Bennett. Adelphi Co. \$2 net.
MAKERS OF NAVAL TRADITION. By Carroll Storrs Alden and Ralph Earle. Ginn. \$1.25.
H. L. MENCKEN. By Ernest Boyd. McBride. \$1 net.
MY EDUCATION AND RELIGION. By George A. Gordon. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.
SAMUEL PEPPYS. By J. Lucas Dubretton. Putnam. \$2.50.
NAPOLEON AND MARIE LOUISE. By Walter Greer. Brentanos.
WHAT I HAVE SEEN AND HEARD. By J. G. Swift MacNeil. Little Brown. \$4.00 net.
FROM IMMIGRANT TO INVENTOR. By Michael Pupin. Scribners. \$2.
THE LIFE OF JOHN BRIGHT. By George W. Trevelyan. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.50.

Drama

25 SHORT PLAYS (INTERNATIONAL). Edited by FRANK SHAY. Appleton. 1925. \$4.

This volume is merely another indication of the fact that the English-speaking races have surpassed all others in

their mastery of the technique of the short play. The play from Australia, "The Accomplice," by A. Marshall, is good but would be better if "Soul" were renamed "Conscience" as the two are certainly quite distinct. The Canadian representative: "Brothers in Arms," by M. Denison, is a delightful little skit of an "efficient" man who tries to hurry a lazy backwoodsman. England's play: "Pan in Pimlico," by Helen Simpson, is a charming bit, concerned with the eternal element in love. "The Marriage," by Douglas Hyde, is a typical Irish whimsy about a fiddler who wheedles gifts out of stingy neighbors for the new bride who has been kind to him. The play which represents America is certainly not America's best effort. The same might perhaps be said of all this collection. In striving to publish new plays, the editor has not been able always to choose the best.

Fiction

FAME. By MICHELINE KEATING. Putnam. 1925. \$2.

Her publishers announce that Miss Keating was 18 at the completion of her novel, thereby affording us an explanation of certain characteristics which are often the accompaniments of literary immaturity. These are most conspicuously evident in the youthful author's susceptibility to massive rococo interiors, extravagant and barbaric costumes, exotic scents and weird eccentricities of person, her awed wonderment over the physical and aesthetic charms of her characters, a naive enthusiasm for the life of the theatre as it does not exist, and the creation of exaggerated surface contacts whose psychological sources are never penetrated. Miss Keating's work seems to follow the conviction that, in order to prove interesting, fictional people must be abnormally brilliant, or appallingly sinful, or artistically eminent, or immensely rich, or fearfully notorious. By carrying out this theory each one of her vague, but towering, personages becomes a super-this or-that which bears no distinct semblance to a reality in the mind of the reader.

Briefly, the tale is the story of Namour, the illegitimate daughter of a celebrated actress who until her late teens has been safely reared in a convent, untouched by the pernicious atmosphere of her mother's world. The girl comes home to live permanently with the still gay and amorous *artiste*. Here a general bedlam of chaotic emotions and heart complications is let loose. Namour's hectic and incredible experience of love, sorrow, disillusionment, marriage, wealth, achievement and happiness fills the balance of the tale. Miss Keating seems to have gracefully mastered some of the difficult first steps of her craft and despite her crudities shows enough aptitude to warrant a hopeful view of her future.

THE FIRE WOMAN. By W. P. LAWSON. Boni & Liveright. 1925. \$2.

Mr. Lawson, in selecting for the materials of his story a fanatical religious sect of primitive, Mexican flagellants, the "Penitentes," said still to survive in the Truchas Mountains of Arizona, gave himself an enviable opportunity for the manufacture of gripping, imaginative horrors. But he has missed grasping his chances by a wide margin, for instead of producing something unusual, he exhibits merely a conventional lurid melodrama with a brave American heroine, fiendish Mexican ruffians, and a stalwart forest ranger hero. It is true that in the course of the narrative we are given several "close-ups" of the "Penitentes" celebrating their dread torture rites with whips, crucifixions, and mystic incantations, but even these unpleasant high spots moved us to no responsive creeps.

THE SECRET OF BOGEY HOUSE. By HERBERT ADAMS. Lippincott. 1925. \$2.

Although Mr. Adams's mystery novel seems to us a minor member of the populous tribe, he has known how (Continued on next Page)

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The New Books Fiction

(Continued from preceding page)

to keep the action humming, the interest high, and the flimsy secret impregnable to the end. One might be over-exacting to demand more, but in our reading of the book we felt that we were being led on by a deliberately fostered expectancy of great doings just ahead which invariably failed to materialize. The story concerns the efforts of one young Englishman to solve the enigma of another young Englishman's death, the latter having met with foul play while a guest at the oddly managed and strangely peopled hostel, Bogey House. Love, smugglers, smooth rogues, fabulous thefts, sinister intrigues, subterranean caves complicate the pursuit of our Sherlock's activities. The turns and twists of the story's progress are accomplished with numerous quiet surprises, but they are not fired at us with enough explosive power. They fail to deliver the all-important "kick," without which a mystery yarn is as ineffective as a rickey devoid of gin.

HARD WOOD. By ARTHUR O. FRIEL. Penn. 1925. \$2.

Primitive love, ferocious hatred, feuds to the death, moonshine, arson, stark all-round cussedness among the rugged hillbillies of Northern New York, are the rough ingredients of Mr. Friel's romance. There is lacking in it any trace of the quaint beauty by which tales of this sort are sometimes saved from utter stupidity. The imagined people are a herd of surly, savage animals, battering and killing one another in constant outbursts of brutish fury. Harry Wood, nicknamed "Hard" because of his general toughness, is the mountaineer hero. His part demands that he conform strictly to the standard design of his type, and this he does in approved penny-dreadful style.

EYES OF INDIA. By GERVE BARONTI. Macaulay. 1925. \$2.

This is a novel peculiarly difficult to appraise briefly without giving a misleading idea of it. There is much that is very fine in it: an inherent honesty in its conception, a plain sincerity and integrity in its thought and feeling. If the total impression it leaves is not that of an entire success something may be due to the extent and complexity of what the author has tried to do: perhaps an attempt to cover too much ground. It aims to give much of the varied background of life in India: native, half caste, and intruding European and each in its reactions to the others. Many brilliant and quite convincing pictures emerge: of the life of the tea planters in Assam and, at the other end of India, in Madras, glimpses of Benares, of the Mohammedans of Calcutta, and also of the jungle. But this, after all, is background, although it is the sort of background which is an integral part of the whole, not mere stage setting.

The central theme, so far as it can be detached, is the unsatisfactoriness of conventional marriage, as illustrated, by contrast, in the portrayal of an entirely, idyllically satisfactory extra-marital union. The hero of the tale is unhappily married to a nonentity when he and another woman meet. The wife leaves him, placidly enough, and he and Cynthia live together—and that is all.

BEHIND THE RANGES. By ANNE SHANNON MOORE. Doubleday, Page. 1925. \$2.

This is something distinctly above the usual level of the wild West yarn, although the conclusion of the piece rather peters out as it runs into the familiar melodramatic clean-up with an assortment of shootings and the expected "clinch." There is a certain freshness in the *mise-en-scene*, which presents a remote section of Oregon, "behind the ranges" a forgotten tract of high plains bordering a desert, far from a railroad. It is still cattle country and the inhabitants are ranchmen, big and little. The skeleton of the plot is the usual conflict between the aggressive big ranch owner, with capital, and political "pull" and the earlier settler. The values of the book lie in its able character drawing and in the capable handling of its dramatic situations. It holds the interest well.

MARSH LIGHTS. By RACHEL SWETE MACNAMARA. Small, Maynard. 1925. \$2.

The ancient triangle is here revived and put through some fairly entertaining, if not very startling, tricks, whose execution strains neither the credulity of the reader nor subjects the characters to emotional conflicts beyond the bounds of reason. Barring infrequent lapses into sentimental gush, the book is respectably written, and its people evolve logically the succession of incidents leading to the critical summit of their three-cornered love affair.

THE WOLF MAN. By ALFRED MACHARD. Clode. 1925. \$2.

Melodramas relating the trials and perils of unjustly imprisoned convicts are scarcely a novelty, nor does the present version of the theme prove an exception. Leon Barnier, the Valjeanesque hero, is here presented in the manner of Sue, and particularly reminiscent of the latter, are M. Marchard's crew of French criminals, the Secret Society of Escaped Convicts, who take their refugee brother into the security of their own hiding-place. It is ten years since Leon's escape from confinement to penal servitude in the tropics, twenty years since sentence was passed upon him for a murder which he did not commit, and in the decade of his reclaimed freedom he has settled among strangers, prospered modestly under another name, married happily, becomes the father of a little boy, Boubou, and a widower.

It is during the nuptial feast of his second marriage that Leon, now forty-five, is forced to take flight from the police who, having unearthed his identity, have him cornered. But five days have to elapse for the expiration of the twenty years' sentence at the end of which, by French law, Leon will be a free man and exempt from apprehension by his pursuers. Taking the beloved Boubou with him in the disguise of a girl, Leon heads for Paris in an endeavor to hold his precious freedom for the fateful five days. The Brotherhood of Escaped Convicts gives him sanctuary on condition that he stain his hands once more with human blood. What follows develops and moves with commendable swiftness, despite the creaking of materials which have grown shaky and decrepit from over-use. The story is an ideal, readymade victim for the knives of the Hollywood butchers, who at least would not be mangling a masterpiece in adapting the text to movie presentation.

THE NEGLECTED CLUE. By ISABEL OSTRANDER. McBride. 1925. \$2.

This posthumous detective-murder tale seems thoroughly to deserve the attention of Miss Ostrander's former following, for it measures up very creditably with the best of recent and numerous volumes of the same kind which we have read. Its use of certain approved mechanics, grown seedy and transparent from repeated adoption, is sagacious and subdued. In fact the old "stuff," generously oiled, freshly painted, working without a squeak or a hitch, achieves a state of surprising rejuvenation.

The story revolves about the death of Alma Leigh, a beautiful and wealthy widow, who has chosen to live in the quiet seclusion of Edendale, a Long Island village. Her friendly and affluent neighbors know nothing of her past, though it is apparent that she has been and still is a person of exceeding brilliancy and distinction. Late one night she is murdered on the terrace of her estate by a deep stab wound in the breast. No trace of weapon or murderer is found, nor is there any faintest clue to indicate the identity of the guilty. Dr. Oakes, the village coroner and his friend Peterby, an elderly retired stock-broker, set forth upon a manifold investigation, which necessitates the following of innumerable false leads growing out of the exciting revelations they unearth from the dead woman's carefully guarded past. The successive steps in the dénouement are taken in full view of the reader, and the interest in the unraveling of the mystery is well sustained.

DOODAB. By HAROLD A. LOEB. Boni & Liveright. 1925. \$2.

This is another novel composed under the spell of James Joyce. It traces the

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fortunes of Henry Doodab, an unhappy, volatile creature oppressed by his wife and the inhuman business world. When after twenty-two years of service Henry loses his job, he flees to the mountains. Failing to become a miner, he returns to the city, and, wandering through its streets, finds temporary comfort in a dream world inhabited by a fantastic race of savages, whom he leads in battle against the forces of philistinism. His now diseased fancy transforms a locomotive into a tank; he dashes forward to