

more versatile in her matter than in her manner—the characterizations are of the deftest. The author shows herself sister under the skin not only to her gentlewomen, novelists, and dwellers in Mayfair, but also to a wizened, pimply clerk on trial for the murder of his sweetheart and to Sadie, the moron maid-of-all-work who longed so romantically for the misbegotten child she had lost. In fact it is difficult to choose between such tales as "Four o'Clock," "A Meeting in Mayfair," "Tapestry Needlework," and "Beauty," "No Verdict," "An Accident on the Quai Voltaire." In any case, these six stories are the best in an excellent book—a book that is at once entertaining and artistically satisfying.

## Two Sisters

FROM MAN TO MAN (or PERHAPS ONLY . . .). By OLIVE SCHREINER. New York: Harper & Bros. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by AMY WELLINGTON

"FROM Man to Man" tells in part the life story of two sisters. One of the sisters, physically beautiful, loving, and generous, but weak of intellect and weaker of will, stumbles ignorantly into the ways of a prostitute. "There was a dull, obstinate resolution in it [Baby-Bertie's face]," wrote Olive Schreiner, "the only form of strength her face ever wore." It is this "dull, obstinate resolution" in taking wrong turns, aided by pious mischief-making and the greed and cruelty of a Jew, that pushes Baby-Bertie along the road which leads from happy and industrious motherhood on an African farm to a brothel in Soho.

The older sister, Rebekah, intellectual and an idealist, as ignorantly marries a prostitute. For with Olive Schreiner, one must remember, there was no sex distinction in prostitution. He who bought was equally the prostitute with her who sold. Baby-Bertie dies early of syphilis. Rebekah, after hazards almost as great, severs her marriage tie and escapes, with her children, the extreme physical penalty. With all her intellect and nobility of purpose, the older sister is corrupted even as the younger. There is the spirit of a slave in her relation with her husband, a dogged devotion to that which she knows is depraved and dangerous. She does not possess enough mother love to protect her children. This attitude invites kicks, and her husband does not hesitate to administer them verbally. Rebekah even submits to the "half-curious, half-contemptuous," and wholly deserved, smile of the various other women with whom he lives, and finally to the insults of her colored maid. Nothing but the arrival of a yellowish-brown, frizzly-haired half-sister to her children, not long after the birth of her youngest son, rouses this Rebekah to the saving realization that it is "our degradation," and not her husband's alone.

All this seems a little antiquated today, particularly amongst thinking women; but it was true and tragic enough in the 1870's when Olive Schreiner began to write her novel. Prostitution was "the most agonizing central point" of all her thought concerning women. She knew prostitutes, not only knew them but loved them, just as she loved every inarticulate, half-extinguished thing on earth. There is no plumbing such tenderness. She brought to the study of Baby-Bertie the same divine comprehension that Charles-Louis Philippe bestowed upon his Berthe Méténier. "Bubu-de-Montparnasse" and "From Man to Man" are novels far apart, yet one thing more Philippe and Olive Schreiner had very remarkably in common. Their violent scorn was for the society which makes the Baby-Berties and the Berthe Météniers, and not for its victims. It was not Berthe, or even her bully Bubu, whom Philippe regarded as the "social evil," but poverty. It was not stupid, blundering Baby-Bertie whom Olive Schreiner found abominable, but the pious Mrs. Drummond, the proper Veronica (sensualists both), and Aunt Mary-Anna, the Aunt Mary-Annas of both sexes, who lived undisputed in the 1870's. "With a man it's different; he can live down anything—but the soap isn't invented that can wash a woman's character clean." So Aunt Mary-Anna, with her parrot cry; Don't tell me—don't tell me what I don't want to know! For such representatives of Victorian society, Olive Schreiner was an explosive of peculiar and annihilating power.

Only the prelude of this novel, begun when the author was about twenty, and which had to be put together after his death from versions long worked over is printed exactly as the author wrote it, so Mr.

Cronwright-Schreiner informs us. Yet six of the thirteen long chapters had received Olive Schreiner's sanction to the extent of retyping in triplicate, and the seven remaining chapters do not reveal, at least to the present reader, any other considerable work than her own. The particularity, moreover, with which the editor has put in brackets his few insertions of missing words, corrections of grammar, and explanatory footnotes, indicates but a slight alteration of the manuscript. But no amount of editing can lessen the essential greatness of Olive Schreiner as a thinker and an artist, or destroy the effectiveness of a novel, which in beauty of unfolding thought, in depth and brilliancy of description, surpasses occasionally "The Story of an African Farm."

## In the Dickens Tradition

CRAVEN HOUSE. By PATRICK HAMILTON. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT B. MACDOUGALL

THE wise book-reviewer keeps his superlatives for the day when he meets such a novel as "Craven House," and he avoids saying that so-and-so joins the most eminent novelists now practicing in English until he encounters such abilities as those of Mr. Patrick Hamilton. But then the lid blows off his reticence, caution is tossed out of the window, and the close-guarded superlatives are given free play. And so I say that this novel is the most delightful that I have read in many, many months, that in its wise contemplation of the human scene, in its strong individuality it is a novel to read and reread, familiarity bringing constantly greater joy. It is a novel that will stay with you happily when you have closed the book; you will share it with your friends, that they may understand your exhilaration. Mr. Hamilton has arrived with a surprising suddenness and a distracting definiteness, for although his first novel, "Monday Morning," was good, it by no means promised the mature brilliance of his second, "Craven House."

This Craven House was a respectable and only slightly dingy London dwelling, not far from Chiswick High Road, somewhere between Hammer-smith and Kew. Miss Hatt was its mistress, presiding over the destinies of two servants, a parrot, and some half-dozen "paying guests." For the space of the novel we live with these poor searchers for a home, we see into their two-by-four minds, their cherished little habits. The very atmosphere of suspicious dignity that colors every interminable meal creeps like a London fog into our spirits as we read. I must not give you the impression that the account of these lives is sordid; nothing could be more of an injustice to the novel. The dominant characteristic is, rather, a sly wit and an unerring, yet somehow friendly satire. We note the essential absurdity of Mr. and Mrs. Spicer, of Mrs. Nixon, of Miss Hatt; we laugh, and still we know that at bottom all this is no laughing matter. As these casuals of the city move through their comedy to a farcical-tragical climax that sends them scattering forever, we see them, I believe, much as some benevolent yet slightly puzzled tribal God might see them, essentially impotent for all their squirmings, not worth very much to anyone—and all terribly sad. But this feeling is more in retrospect than as we read, for the surface of "Craven House" is as merry and winning as you could ask. The humors are the effervescence of a second-rate boarding house that, however dull and musty, is a microcosm of life and a comment upon the universe.

Mr. Hamilton has an astonishing genius for drawing characters that emerge from the book-world into actual existence. Although there is never exaggeration, there is occasionally the intelligent emphasis of a Beerbohm caricature. Most of these characters would be unpleasant to live with, but a few, say three or four, are spiritually amiable. Thus the balance of the real world is kept. These triumphs appear again and again throughout the novel, and major and minor figures alike are more real to us than many people we meet every day. Take Mr. Creevy, for instance, whose bleak existence in the office of the Xotopol Rum Company (Ltd.) uses up no more than a passing moment of Mr. Hamilton's time—

. . . Mr. Creevy's general gestures in life [were] . . . thin and exact—Mr. Creevy being a great expert in all the more Lilliputian and dapper activities of life—an experienced and exquisite pencil-sharpener, a highly finished umbrella-roller, a brilliant apple-peeler, a scintillating fountain-pen-filler, a pince-nez polisher. Any

blunders made by other persons in these or similar functions caused Mr. Creevy the sharpest spiritual agonies pending actual interference. An orderly and fearfully exact citizen was Mr. Creevy, too. A man who pulled all doors he was told to Pull, and pushed all doors he was told to Push, who went in by the Way In, and came out by the Way Out; who naturally went the longest way round, if it was the shortest way home; who Bewared of the Trains, or the Bull; who Did not Smoke, who Shopped Early, who Knocked and Rang; and *did* let you have a line from Ventnor on his holiday. . . .

You will not forget Mr. Creevy, even though he is probably the least important person of the novel.

"Craven House" is a vision of London boarding-house life, humorous, penetrating, and at bottom satirical. Of all the characters, only the servants and the young lovers are not made game of. The realism is intense, although it never assumes that the mirror to life can reflect only sordidness and sex, and the whole of life is portrayed. It is a novel that you will go to, time and time again, to find and reread some old, friendly passage. You will be reminded of Dickens, of the Wells of "Tono-Bungay" and "Mr. Polly," yet Mr. Hamilton creates for himself.

## Russian Peasants

DECADENCE. By MAXIM GORKY. New York: Robert B. McBride & Co. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THERE is a continuous and curious dullness in this book—dullness in the literal, objective sense, as opposed to sharpness. Blurred outlines, points that do not penetrate, pictures veiled in a sort of fog, as in a half-developed photographic plate. The strong, tired hands are trying to fashion something. They go fumbling on through endless pages of printed words, and that something never quite comes through. If one wanted to sentimentalize, one might say that there is a sort of sadness, too. But why sentimentalize, or where is the sadness in the fact that a work of art produced at one time in a man's life is not equal to the works of art produced at another time in that man's life? A man wins a hundred-yard dash in ten seconds flat, at nineteen. At seventy, he may not be able to run hundred-yard dashes at all, but what—except for the individual himself, looking back on his own youth—is there sad in that? He may still tramp clear across the continent on his own feet, like E. P. Weston!

Great works of art are like broken records, at least in this—they are something outside of life as ordinarily and normally lived, they spring from a variety of happy coincidences, inside and outside of the individual, which permit him to touch perfection for longer or shorter instants, and so to say, do better than his best. The gods were kind enough to give Maxim Gorky some of those instants. Is it fair to expect that, with the whole scheme of things in which they were vouchsafed, smashed to bits, in a foreign land, in another world altogether, he can pick up the thread where, a generation or so ago, he left it off? What sort of a violin solo, for example, would Kreisler play, clinging to a water-logged spar somewhere in the Arctic?

Any of the Russians of the old Russia who are making novels or pictures or music today, must necessarily break through the crust of the present and bring up something from the subconscious past. Of course, that is true of any artist, working at any time. But "emotion reproduced in tranquility," as ordinarily understood, is one thing, and emotion salvaged and dragged, so to speak, across the barrier of an interval in which the artist became almost another sort of individual altogether, is quite another.

It may not seem quite fair to measure a contemporary artist's work against the known terms of his personal life, and yet in the case of the Russians, and in particular of Gorky, one can scarcely leave such considerations out of account. The Revolution was more of a shipwreck for him than for many. He was drawn into it so far as for a time to cease to be the artist, and to try to be an economist, sociologist, politician, and goodness knows what. Then, in the languid and disturbing air of Capri, he sought to refind himself, and to live back into the old and vanished Russian life again. In this blurred and turgid narrative of the rise and fall of three generations of a Russian peasant family, the reader can scarcely escape the consciousness of that struggle and its difficulty. If these Artamomovs do not "come through," in spite of flashes here and there of their reality, there are reasons enough.

## Eskimo Life

ACROSS ARCTIC AMERICA. Narrative of the Fifth Thule Expedition. By KNUD RASMUSSEN. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1927. \$5.

Reviewed by ISAIAH BOWMAN

Director, American Museum of Natural History

THE equipment which Dr. Rasmussen brings to the study of Eskimo life and culture is altogether extraordinary. Twenty-five years of experience have given him a store of original learning about Eskimos that is matched by that of no other living person. In addition he knows the language like a native. In this respect he is a unique figure in human history. Above all, he himself has a small percentage of Eskimo blood. When he was a small boy his greatest delight was in driving a dogsled, living on Eskimo fare, and listening with youthful poignancy and wonder to the traditions and folklore of a people he has made his own. No one else has looked so far into the depths of Eskimo character. No one else who has written on the life of the Eskimos has so faithfully caught the qualities that make them a distinctive people. What Rasmussen has to say of them comes out of the depths of his feeling no less than his experience. His clear and vivid sentences carry a sense of reality, of spiritual quality, over and above the meanings of the words that he employs. He writes as he speaks, in such a way as to invoke the living spirit of Eskimo personalities. The reader catches hold of the handle-bars of Rasmussen's sledge and with him races to the village that can be seen through a flurry of snow. He enters with him the constricted snowhouse, eats the native food, hears the stories, lives the life. This is more than study and research and specialization. It is the hallmark of genius.

During three years of travel Rasmussen and the divisions of his expedition were able to visit practically every known Eskimo tribe from Greenland to Siberia. By more or less direct route the distance is five thousand miles and this was doubled by side expeditions, hunting trips, and the like. Over that long period he had but two Eskimo companions, Mitek (eider duck), a young man of twenty-two, and Arnarulunguaq (a little woman), a widow of twenty-eight. The party lived native fashion, sometimes sharing with the Eskimo families they visited, often hunting on their own account. Without accident or illness they made the longest Arctic traverse on record and gathered results of the most extraordinary popular interest and of the highest scientific importance.

Rasmussen and his companions were able to converse with all of the Eskimos they met, regardless of variations of speech from place to place. Through the language variations and the changes of culture from place to place Rasmussen has been able to piece together a connected account of the centers of origin and the direction of distribution of the Eskimos themselves. In the tribes of the Barren Grounds and especially in the Baker Lake region northwest of Hudson Bay are the most primitive groups of all. Here the Caribou Eskimo have maintained in isolated areas their Stone-Age culture. Here the Eskimos live under the greatest natural handicaps, revelling in abundance and suffering extremely from want even to actual starvation according as the caribou are available on their annual migrations northward and southward or are out of reach during the long winter. Rasmussen believes that in this region he has found the Tunit of Eskimo legend, who lived in stone houses and who were the ancestors of the people that ranged over the archipelago north of Canada and whose descendants peopled the coasts of Arctic America. One of his most interesting conclusions is that the coast culture, which depended upon marine animals, was a later development in Eskimo evolution, and that it spread westward in the first instance clear to Alaska before moving eastward again to find its farthest extension on the coasts of Greenland.

If Rasmussen could be persuaded to write a series of books in English giving the sum of his findings during the last quarter century of Eskimo study it would be not merely a great gain to scientific students; it would be appreciated by all readers who enjoy books of exploration that are written with deep feeling and a high degree of literary finish, and above all, that are permeated with immortal spiritual qualities that few men possess. In these respects Rasmussen may be compared with Hudson and it is a reasonable prophecy that his writings may in time achieve an equal fame.

## The BOWLING GREEN

### The Folder

SONG FOR A TELESCOPE

UNDER the magic of your lenses  
The suns exult, the systems sing,  
And comets flourish thin cadenzas  
Against the stars' deep trumpeting.

But through the shadowy embrasures  
You open in the walls of time  
I hear the beat of ominous measures  
Beyond my reason or my rhyme.

My ultimate interrogation  
You meet with spheres of dust or flame  
Of sure and sinister gyration  
And undiscoverable aim.

Hid in the uttermost recesses  
Of that great room your might unbars  
May there be hunger and caresses  
Or only undesiring stars?

Today the jonquil and the crocus  
Unfolded to the April sun.  
Tonight, all tragedies you focus  
Into the overwhelming One. . . .

Not for the brevity or bareness  
Of being do I make lament,  
But for its terrible awareness,  
So keen, and still so impotent.  
JOHN FRENCH WILSON.

I implore any versifying clients of the Bowling Green not to be misled, by my printing the above, into shooting me a lot of verses. The Green has only turf for about one contributed poem a year. I do not like Mr. Wilson's base-born rhyme in the first stanza; but "sure and sinister gyration," and also the final stanza, gave me a genuine thrill.

Mr. A. Edward Newton, the book collector, lately put up a sun-dial in the garden of his home at Daylesford, Pa. Casting about for a lapidary sentiment (it is odd that he found nothing in his favorite Dr. Johnson) Mr. Newton was grieved to observe that so many of the traditional sun-dial mottoes are in Latin. He disapproved the notion of a Latin epigram on his dial, and finally decided on the following very pretty couplet—whose provenance, however, he did not tell me—

*I'll live tomorrow, you delaying cry—  
In what far country does tomorrow lie?*

One of the pleasantest of the Caliph Newton's humors is to have framed in his guest-rooms the *Table of Kindred and Affinity* which one finds in the back of the Anglican prayer-book. It is reassuring and sedative, before turning out the light, to contemplate the list of thirty people (Sister's Son's Wife, Wife's Brother's Daughter, Wife's Daughter's Daughter, etc.) whom a man may not marry. At least, one ponders, life is that much simplified.

I see that a Congress for discussion of French language and literature has just been held at Columbia University, including such agreeable festivities as a supper-dance aboard the paquebot *Paris*. Which causes me to remark that my own study of French has been marked by a humiliation. I had always rather bragged a little, privately, about having once, riding in a train from Paris to Granville, written a French poem about the Venus of Melos. It went like this:—

*S'il fallait perdre des allures  
Une échange j'aurais faite—  
Et pour tes bras si blancs et purs  
Je manquerais ta tête!*

The English version of the sentiment was:—

*If thine must be imperfect charms  
I know what I'd replace,  
And gladly, for those strong white arms  
Forego thy drowsy face.*

But now, rediscovering the manuscript, and feeling a twinge of doubt, I turn to my Larousse and learn that *échange* is masculine, which undoes my rhyme. I appeal to the Fédération de l'Alliance Française, exhilarated by their supper-dance, to tell me what to do with this quatrain. I offer my copy of Abel Bonnard's *Éloge de l'Ignorance* as a prize for the best correction of this poem in pukka French. Meanwhile I shall cut the pages of an admirable little book I bought last summer, called *Apprenons la Grammaire! Seul et Sans Peine*.

Mr. J. B. Kerfoot—and I wish I could see his name more often on some articles in this Review—writes from the Hotel Meurice, Paris:—

We have just finished a six weeks' motor trip through the French provinces, with a dip into northern Italy, and I've thought from time to time of your reports of your experiences here. We passed Tonnerre on the right, but just the same I waved a greeting in its direction for you. Have you ever tried Beaune Hospice 1915, at Beaune itself, and then gone through the marvellous old Hotel Dieu run (in the unaltered surroundings and methods of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) by the Soeurs of the order of the Saint Esprit from Malines? If not, make for both next chance you get. The wine is wonderful and I know of no other place on earth where one can actually see the fifteenth century still functioning with no consciousness of anachronism. I found quite a bundle of *Saturday Reviews* waiting for me in Paris and am enjoying them.

The answer to Mr. Kerfoot's question is in the affirmative; and if he doesn't stop I shall get out my wine-card from the Hôtel de la Poste in Beaune (Cave très renommée) and quote a lot of it, such as "D'après les plus récentes statistiques, la moyenne de l'existence chez les abstinents du vin est de 51 ans, tandis qu'elle est de 63 ans chez les buveurs modérés. . . les buveurs d'eau se prédisposent à le neurasthénie et à des maladies graves, comme l'appendicite."

The West, and quite rightly, is not going to let our praise of the New Century Limited pass without comment. A friendly official of the Southern Pacific Company writes from San Francisco:—

As possessor of every issue of *The Saturday Review* may I express the hope that some time you may enjoy another "capsule of eternity" on either the PADRE running along El Camino Real over which the Franciscan friars journeyed from mission to mission between Los Angeles and San Francisco, or on the SHASTA running between San Francisco and Portland.

I hope so too. And by the way, I was amused to see at Manhattan Transfer—hastening away from New York—a Pullman car named *Frugality*.

They instruct me that this is the Spring Book Number of the Review, in which publishers make announcements of forthcoming wares; so it cannot be unmannerly to mention a book not actually issued yet, but due (I think) within a few days. I refer to Mr. Don Marquis's *The Almost Perfect State*.

*The Almost Perfect State* was founded on Nassau Street. I mean that it began in the days when *The Sun* was still on that alley and when the building across the way was an honest dramshop and not just a drug-store. And when Don was writing those pieces for his column I like to imagine that he himself was sometimes surprised at the copy that uncoiled from the typewriter. He pretends that he never entirely made up his mind just how seriously he wanted some of it taken; however that may be, amid some very gorgeous juggling and foolery it contained his ripest and most fecund wisdom. The series offered the perfect framework for a certain phase of his pondering humor—which, like the wit praised by Rosalind, was always wisest at its most wayward. Now, after several years of disappearance in the files, it is a joy, and something more than a joy, to greet these sketches again. There are few books so sure to make you laugh aloud, with that spontaneous exhaling guffaw that comes with a curly tremolo from the midriff; there are few books of today that conceal so just a thoughtfulness under so unpretentious a manner. This paper is dated Shakespeare's birthday; there is a pleasant appropriateness in here paying tribute to the man who, more than any other in current American newspapers, contributed that special vein of freakish, fierce and tender wisdom we associate with the Shakespearean Fool. If you are the kind of reader I like to think you are, you'll not miss this, it is an Almost Perfect Book.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.