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The New Books Biography

(Continued from preceding page)

room, however, for a larger biography containing a rounded criticism of the poet's work. The intimacy between Thompson and the Meynell family (for which the lovers of the poet can never be sufficiently grateful) inevitably involves his first and, so far, best biographer. Meynell's very close knowledge of his father's protégé is not always an advantage. Indeed it is marvellous that he contrives to see Thompson with such comparatively impersonal eyes. But whatever biographers or critics may finally write to supersede this delicately written book will nevertheless owe Mr. Meynell a great debt.

TRANSITION. By Will Durant. Simon & Schuster. \$3.

BEETHOVEN: THE SEARCH FOR REALITY. By W. J. Turner. Doran. \$6 net.

THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL DUCHESS. By Horace Bleackley. Dodd, Mead. \$3.50.

FRANZ JOSEPH. Edited by Otto Ernst. Stokes. \$5.

THE DIARY OF LADY FREDERICK CAVENDISH. Edited by John Bailey. Stokes.

LETTERS OF A LOYALIST LADY. Harvard.

JOHN MACDONALD. Harpers. \$4.

LORD BYRON'S HELMET. By Maud Howe Elliott. Houghton Mifflin. \$1.50.

UP THE YEARS FROM BLOOMSBURY. By George Arliss. Little, Brown. \$4 net.

THE LOG OF A COWBOY. By Andy Adams. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.

Drama

THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF SIR GEORGE ETHEREGE. Two volumes. Houghton Mifflin. 1927. \$3.

These two volumes of the works of the great precursor of Wycherley, Congreve, and Sheridan appear as Number VI in the series of The Percy Reprints whose General Editor is H. F. B. Brett-Smith, M.A. Mr. Brett-Smith has also been the special editor of this particular item, and has furnished introduction and notes. The volumes are pleasingly made, bound in this instance in smooth red boards, with gray dust-covers. They fit into a gray cardboard slip-case. They are to be recommended as an especially handy edition for the study.

ONE MORE RIVER: A Modern Comedy.

By ASHLEY DUKES. Doran. 1927. \$1.25.

Mr. Dukes's blank verse comedy is a slight, nonsensical, but entertaining *tour de force*, satirically dedicated to "the dramatists of the drawing-room." The action takes place today in a Wiltshire country house, actually a restored monastery which has been turned into

A home for the divorced.

A temporary home, a house of rest,

Between the nisi and the absolute.

The proprietress is herself awaiting her absolute decree. The rigid rules of the establishment are broken by the appearance of an angry husband to claim his wife. There is a series of mistaken identities and a final reconciliation. The humor throughout is thin although some of the situations are ingenious. "One More River" is a play that would probably act better than it reads. The author himself calls it a trifle. Yet it is by no means an unconsidered trifle. So much art to so little purpose seems wasted. Mr. Dukes is fiddling instead of playing the violin. But his blank verse is deliberately and deliciously ludicrous. Not many of the younger English playwrights can match his literary skill. It is time he gave us another "Man with a Load of Mischief." "One More River" is not an improvement on his earlier work.

SATURDAY'S CHILDREN. By Maxwell Anderson. Longmans, Green. \$2.

THE THEATRE. By Stark Young. Doran. \$1.50.

THE ART OF THEATRE-GOING. By John Drinkwater. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.

Fiction

THIS WAY UP. By SOLITA SOLANO. Putnam. 1927. \$2.

A mushy-brained young American twice interrupts his liaison with a Spanish trollop: first when he marries and remains for the eternity of a month faithful to his wife; second, when he dies from heart-failure. All else is the frantic and futile effort to anticipate the whims of his Rosario. Thus runs the edifying fable of Miss Solano's third novel, "This Way Up." We should not resent a mouldy narrative so actively, however, if it were not tricked out in as luscious fustian as one could wish for one's enemy's book. In short, an execrable style and a wearisome narrative make this novel one to avoid.

THE SON OF THE GRAND EUNUCH.
By CHARLES PETTIT. Boni & Liveright.
1927. \$3.

Nothing in the advertisements of this book tells us whether it is a translation from the French or the work of an American author. But we are told that it is a Chinese novel (does that mean a novel about China?) and also that "the closest comparison in method might be made with Voltaire's 'Candide,' Pierre Louy's 'Aphrodite,' and Anatole France's 'Penguin Island.'" If a novel without wit, humorous only in its basic conception, without any satirical purpose in particular, certainly lacking any definite humanistic purpose, can be compared with "Candide" and "Penguin Island" (the reviewer has not read "Aphrodite") it is time for literary criticism to put out the light. There is a very good reason for the coarser details in Anatole France and Voltaire. They subserve a philosophic criticism of life. Mr. Pettit's coarseness subserves nothing but itself. But he manages his tale with considerable skill and to pretend that he is not entertaining would be ridiculous. All the less reason therefore for the pretence that his book has a philosophic basis, even a Chinese one. Actually it is a third rate novel of rather unclean character, interesting chiefly because of its exotic appeal and the author's apparently first-hand acquaintance with China.

GIDEON. By INEZ HAYNES IRWIN. Harpers. 1927. \$2.

Gideon is another of the little children of divorce. Caught between the upper and the nether millstones of an uncomprehended parental complexity, he finds his divergent loyalties beyond his control. Brought up in an atmosphere of gin and jazz, he has never been attracted to either nor to the sensation-seeking set with which his adored Bella (his mother) is constantly surrounded. This doll-like, irresponsible mother has left no doubt in Gideon's mind that his father was altogether in the wrong in the marital crisis which precipitated the divorce. Circumstances force the boy to spend a summer in his hitherto unknown father's home, a home of rare tranquillity and understanding presided over by a wife who is in every way the antithesis of Bella. The discovery of Gideon that there may be two sides to a story gives the author an opportunity for a study in adolescent psychology of which she makes the very most. The boy's slow mental processes, the meagerness of material upon which to base his conclusions, his reluctance to surrender the authoritarianism of youth, and the shock of finding deception where utter truth had seemed to be,—all this is so skilfully and so completely presented that the overemphasized contrast between the two homes and the artificiality of the dénouement may well be overlooked.

THE ROYAL CRAVATTS. By LILLIAN ROGERS. Washburn. 1927. \$2.50.

"The Royal Cravatts" are not neckties,—but a well-written novel dealing with the life in New York of a Jewish immigrant family named Kravitz. And when that is said almost everything is said. Lillian Rogers has selected for her study a group of characters varied and intrinsically interesting, she has motivated them convincingly, and yet, for one reader at least, they refuse to come alive. It is almost as if the author had dissected rather than analyzed them. The technical workmanship of the book is good; one knows from this first novel that Mrs. Rogers is a woman of wide reading and interests and that her work is the outcome of sympathetic observation. "The Royal Cravatts" is not to be classed with the enormous outpouring of trivial fiction whose titles flame from every book-stall; it has many of the underlying qualities of real literature, but it lacks verve and color.

THE MARRIAGE OF ANNE. By CONCORDIA MERREL. Doran. 1927. \$2.

This is a straightforward tale of the married life of a middle class young English couple which goes on the rocks because of lack of stamina on the masculine side. There is an eleventh hour happy ending which should be satisfactory to any one who has read that far. Several of the author's characters, although laboring under apparently hereditary sentimentality, are well done and amusing.

THE MONSOON-BIRD. By W. KOBOLD KNIGHT. Crowell. 1927. \$2.

Englishmen in India furnish the principal characters in "The Monsoon-Bird," English men and an English woman. Tea plantations far from civilization furnish the setting. The strain of the monotonous life, climate, fever, antagonistic temperaments, and illicit love tightens the net of circumstance about a story as old as the country in which it is laid and always as

new as an author is able to make it. Mr. Knight relies on the dramatic qualities of the scene and situation for his newness and succeeds in producing a fairly true-to-type love-and-adventure tale.

TARBOE: THE STORY OF A LIFE.

By GILBERT PARKER. Harpers. 1927. \$2.

Frank Tarboe, the son of a French gentleman of dubious character and an Indian woman, both of whom died when their child was young, was bred up in the woods. By the time he was twenty he had saved eleven hundred dollars, the proceeds from the sale of pelts. With this sum he went to Cheyenne City, where he began his long and notorious career as a gambler. He lost but made it up in later years by huge winnings in Los Angeles, London, Monte Carlo, and elsewhere. Having known Tarboe for many years, for he is a living man, the author relates the checkered life-story of this man with much sympathy and understanding. Nevertheless, Sir Gilbert has written much more satisfactory novels.

THE REVOLT OF THE BIRDS. By MELVILLE DAVISSON POST. Appleton. 1927. \$1.50.

Bennett, an adventurer long in the service of the Wu Fang Company, "the most notorious of all the Oriental companies trading in the China seas," recounts this story. To the interested interrogator who records his words, he tells of meeting, upon one of his dubious voyages, a drifting sampan, with a mysterious cloud-like mast. When the ship is overtaken, he finds an unconscious white man upon the rotting deck. The adventures which befel this man and the reasons for his being adrift in a derelict vessel make a fairly interesting tale of the China seas. Incidentally, one must read to the close to discover the significance of the title. If the reader can overlook the extraneous matter introduced before the story gets well under way, the monotonous repetition of one-sentence paragraphs, which frustrates rather than achieves the desired effect, and a few too highly rhetorical passages, a pleasant hour's diversion awaits him.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION. By CLARA SHARPE HOUGH. Century. 1927. \$2.

The most interesting feature in this tale of marital discord is the vividness and accuracy with which its scenes of newspaper life are depicted. Dave Morley, a grind of forty, editor of the *Banner*, leading daily of an eastern Massachusetts city, though ten years married to Serena, still cherishes but two loves, his wife and his work. For Serena there is no other man than Dave, but when a handsome sweetheart of her girlhood turns up, she suspects for a while that the homely, prosaic Dave is not king. Dave resents the threat to his sovereignty, and retaliates by waxing amorous over a lady reporter. When Serena's former beau proves a blackguard by besmirching her name with scandal, conventional misunderstanding and squabbles threaten to wreck the wedded couple's sorely tried union. Their relations to each other, not very naturally, we fear, are led to the brink of absolute disruption, but in the end their imperishable love conquers, and as we part from them it is clear that they are again the same happy, devoted pair we met in Chapter I.

DANGEROUS BUSINESS. By EDWIN BALMER. Dodd, Mead. 1927. \$2.

There is nothing particularly dangerous about the business that goes on here—that business being the competitive war waged for supremacy by several rival Chicago manufacturers in the struggle for top-notch customers—but as light fiction, with a serious underlying intention, the tale is distinctly readable. Mr. Balmer lays stress upon the factor of "entertaining" as sometimes assuming an all-powerful significance in determining the success or failure of strictly mercantile transactions between men of reputable financial standing. That the use of such methods to bring home the bacon can be overplayed to the sorrow and discredit of those innocently involved is demonstrated by young Jay Rountree, Harvard lad, fine fellow, and son of a Chicago magnate. Because he chivalrously marries a New York society girl who has been stung by a snake in the grass, Jay returns to Chicago under a cloud of malignant gossip, incurs the paternal wrath, and has forced upon him the necessity of at once showing the stuff of a go-getter in his father's employ. One of the firm's feminine office workers secretly dotes upon the ill-treated boy, and it is largely through her persevering efforts that Jay secures the coveted contracts which save the family fortunes.

THEY ALSO SERVE. By PETER B. KYNE.

With Decorations by Paul Brown. Cosmopolitan. 1927. \$2.

We had long assumed that every conceivable viewpoint from which to tell a war story had been used, but Mr. Kyne seems to have dug up a new one by making the narrator of this tale a horse. The animal participant in the late conflict is an A. E. F. artillery officer's mount, the blue-blooded property of Ern Givens, his loving cowboy master. When war is declared, Ern

enlists at Camp Doniphan, Okla., choosing to serve in the artillery so that, by lending his horse, "Professor," to a battery officer, he may not be separated from his four-footed pal. On the completion of his training period, Professor, with his three dearest buddies, Ern, Pat Rogan, a veteran sergeant, and Tip, an old army mule, reach France, the survivors of a torpedoed transport, accounted in the records among the missing. The fortunes of war scatter the comrades during their adventures at the front, and

they are not reunited until several years later, at the home of Ern's friend, the battery officer. Professor relates all this with graphic details, as if his mentality were that of a human being, to an admiring couple of his kind far younger than he, but endowed with wits of kindred sagacity. Ingenious though the tale is, there are portions of it written with genuine skill, and the book as a whole is infinitely better reading than its early pages portend.

(Continued on page 223)

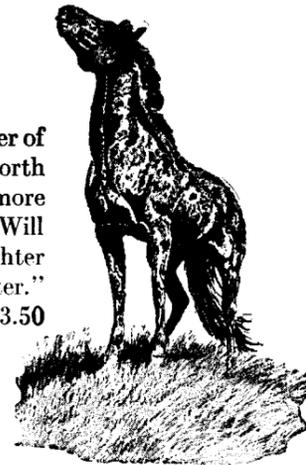
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