

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Your Money's Worth

DO books cost too much? Of course—nothing is cheap now except air, and even good air is getting expensive. But are books sold at prices that cannot be justified? Senators questioning a committee of publishers who sought a reduction in mailing rates expressed themselves emphatically in the affirmative a few weeks ago, although their remarks as quoted did not give an impression of much recent experience in actually buying (or reading) books. Yet—a novel of, say, 325 pages, costs to manufacture about \$1.30 a copy for 5000 copies, additional copies at, say, \$.44 a copy.* Why should it sell for a minimum of \$2.00 or \$2.50?

The publishers reply that cost of manufacture is only the beginning of the total cost of a book. They say that books have doubled in price while most other commodities have tripled. That is a strong argument, but leaves the desire and the need of cheaper books as strong as before. Books, a necessity for intellectual man, are a luxury for the human regarded as animal. Hence it is essential for civilization that they should be made easy to procure.

There are at least three categories of books that must be differentiated before we can see straight in this matter. Rare books have shot up to incredible prices, but this can scarcely be regarded as a social evil. A first edition of Keats in boards is not indispensable to happiness, and the distress of poor collectors is balanced by joy over increasing assets.

Old books, by which one means standard books not of current publication, can still be purchased at low prices, although more can be done, and more is being done, to provide cheap reprints of the whole range of standard literature. The same ingenuity that produced the low-price automobile might result in a considerable saving in a limited number of titles. A few well-known books are even now obtainable at ten cents the copy. Five dollars spent in a second-hand book shop and in series of reprints can still purchase the nucleus of a good library.

The complaint is of new books. In fiction, what once would have been called a dime novel, now costs \$2.00. Outside of fiction, \$5.00 is too often the price of a mediocre book. Five dollars or fifty dollars procures scarcely enough reading matter to keep an eager mind busy a month. What should be done?

The answer must come from the public, rather than the publishers. The publishers cannot limit their product in the modern fashion to a few "lines," and so sell cheap on a fractional profit. Their wares are many, have a short average life, and must be constantly replaced like the units of an army under fire. They make egregious errors, of course, but no more probably than other business men; and that publisher millionaires are rare suggests a reasonable rather than an unreasonable return upon their output. Unquestionably their methods of distribution are weak, but the problem is exceedingly difficult.

One remedy for their troubles and the high price of books which is often proposed is no remedy at all. Let them publish fewer books. Let each publisher reduce his list by two-thirds, and spend all his energy on the remainder. Get out few books, sell many of them, sell them cheap.

And what would be the result of this suggested plan? What books would remain unpublished? The standardized mediocre novel, the stereotyped guide-travel book, the fabricated volumes of misinformation on how-to-succeed, would they be eliminated? Certainly not. These books are sure of a certain sale. The books to be dropped would be precisely

*Figures given by a Boston publisher. Other estimates, \$.35 to \$.40 in quantity.

The Lady

By ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH

The candle is out—
It has crashed to the floor,
She follows the wall
To find the door.

Her petticoats hiss
With a hiss of fear,
A path of sound
For a sensitive ear.

When she puts out her hand
Her breath gives a catch,
Fingers are there
Instead of a latch.

When she reaches back
Lest she should fall
A body is there
Instead of a wall.

What use to scream
So sole alone?
What use to struggle
Against the unknown?

Very well, she said
Imperiously,
Pray light the sconces
So we may see.

Here are my pearls
And here my rings,
And take off your hats,
You filthy things.

Red Theatre

By HALLIE FLANAGAN

THE revolution ripped the Russian stage wide open. It gave drama on its own terms. Tear down the curtain—no more lurking behind curtains in life or art. Out with the silly row of lights dividing us—we are no longer amusers and amused. Board up the orchestra—when we want music we'll have it, but not in a row between actors and audience, not in a pit covered for some inscrutable reason with evergreen. Knock down the flats, which for all your stippling are never anything but painted flats—when we want them we'll use them, but they'll be flats and not tree-trunks. For this, God save the mark, is a theatre—not a drawing room, a forest, or a bazaar.

The crowd pouring night after night into Meierhold's theatre is the most alive audience I have seen in any country. It is full blooded, vigorous, coarse, rough, careless in dress and manner, laughing, jostling, talking, shouting approval or disapproval. Workers, students, artists, soldiers surge into the great, bare theatre, take possession of the hard seats, fill the wooden boxes (which are literally boxes, not plush and gold bathtubs), and pack the galleries, from which they proceed to hang precariously, eating caviare sandwiches and exchanging pleasantries with the stage hands, who are rolling screens about with a careless efficiency far different from the usual last minute scramble before the curtain goes up. It is impossible to tell where audience leaves off and drama begins; it is difficult to decide whether to watch the boisterous crowd or the free, high stage, a stage stripped bare, with a back wall of bricks, with trestles and ladders and machinery in sight of the audience.

A bell rings, late comers crowd in, some finding seats, others going up the aisles and taking possession of the stage, a stage equipped with the material at hand, wood and steel in which Russia is rich. At her disposal no fabric save coarsest rep and wool. What matter? Her audience is dressed in coarsest rep and wool. What point display of luxurious material in a land where velvets, gauzes, silks have gone their way to the everlasting bonfire? The stage is not a fabric stage. No curtains of velvet hanging in folds; no curtains of silk in prismatic colors; no sky curtain of stretched canvas "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold"; no curtains of iridescent gauze behind which move figures richly clad. Not a soft stage, not a lovely stage; no interior decoration, no haberdashery, no "gowns by — gloves by — wraps by —". The shoes worn by Miss . . . in Act III by —. In Meierhold's theatre the shoes, if any, are worn by the actors—that is all we know and all we need to know.

But on so vast a stage, undecorated and undraped, men and women are but pigmy figures? Very well. Toss steel girders to the height of it. Fling steps across the length of it. Throw a bridge across the width of it. Give the actor swings, bars, see-saws to suit the mood of the play. Demand artists who are also athletes and acrobats, whose characterization must stand alone without the aid of beautiful costumes or elaborate properties, whose acting must partake of the honesty of wood and the steely rightness of metal.

To-night we are to see "The Death and Destruction of Europe," which takes place to the accompaniment of jazz played by an orchestra in one of the lower boxes. Insolent rhythms mercilessly underscore the theme, that the nations of the earth are

This Week

"Cambric Tea."

Reviewed by *Rachel Field*

"Maker of Modern Arabia."

Reviewed by *Frances Aziz Ali*

"The Island Within."

Reviewed by *Bernard De Voto*

"The Withered Root."

Reviewed by *Robert Marks*

Three Reviews of Books on the Drama.

By *George C. D. Odell, Donald M. Oenslager, and J. Ranken Towse.*

Mr. Moon's Notebook.

By *William Rose Benét*

The Collected Plays and Poems of Josephine Preston Peabody.

Reviewed by *John Hyde Preston*

Next Week, or Later

"The Closed Garden."

By *Julien Green.*

Reviewed by *Lee Wilson Dodd*

those that represent growth, experiment, and variety in literature. Poetry (at least good poetry) would be flung over wholesale; novels of an experimental character (such as "The Bridge of San Luis Rey"),

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dancing on a mine which is presently to explode capitalism and the bourgeoisie. America is on the list, and with a curious mingling of antagonism and amusement I watch a succession of scenes satirizing our national characteristics. In a Turkish bath several tired business men are being "done over" in order to prepare for putting across big deals on the morrow. These captains of finance, in spite of bald heads and heavy bodies, are unadulterated. Their smugness is the smugness of ignorance. Their aloofness from world affairs is the aloofness of provincial babies. Propensities to brag, to shoot up the town, to spoil their wives, to shake hands violently, are all caricatured as traits of overgrown, rather amusing, entirely immature children. The satire is neither brilliant nor bitter, but broad, and filled with Rabelaisian laughter.



During the intermission, after being thus nationally destroyed, I seek the refreshment room, my Russian companion, as we drink tea in tall glasses, holding forth about propaganda in art. "Art should not be propaganda," he says scornfully. "Who decides what art shall and shall not be? Only small people who cannot create it. The rule about propaganda in art is a silliness made up by those who have no ideas. Art may do anything it is strong enough to do. You see these people, walking, talking, smoking? Some are factory workers, some are Soviet officials, some are students. The girls with the red kerchiefs on their heads belong to the Komsomol, Russia's League of Youth. When they came into the theatre an hour ago all of them were separate individuals, thinking different things. Now they are only one person. They think only what Meierhold wishes them to think. That is because he is an artist and can make people feel what he feels. If a man has a belief burning him, and the belief comes out in a painting or a play, it will burn others, too."

The present conflagration continues with a scene in the French Cabinet, which pokes violent fun at political leaders, many of whom are greeted by shouts of derision from the audience. . . . A scene at a Polish party jibes at bourgeois society and the Church. A scene in a dive (Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, New York?) is a masterpiece of grotesquerie revealing decadence. Fifteen such images, posters done in glaring colors, are staged entirely by wooden screens which roll about, with incredible rapidity to the jazz accompaniment, contriving, with the aid of uncannily clever lighting, to suggest a different atmosphere for each locale. After the fatal weakness of a nation is shown, a map of the world is flashed on the movie screen at the back of the stage, and that particular nation is crossed out, until finally nothing remains save the United Workers of the World, marching proudly along together.

While the destruction of Europe is being thus expeditiously effected, countless performances of like nature, though less skill, are being staged throughout Russia. For this new theatre, born of revolution, has within ten years leaped into astounding life. In 1914 there were in all Russia 210 theatres. In 1920 there were, according to the file in the Educational Bureau, 2197 subsidized theatres, 268 theatres in popular institutions, 3452 active theatrical organizations in villages—6000 in all. For 1927 I could get no actual statistics. Lunacharsky, Commissioner of Education, shrugged and smiled, "It is almost impossible to say, for new theatres spring up by the hundred every week. There are more in one Volga district than in all of France. In Kostroma alone are 600 village theatres; in Nishni Novgorod 9000. No school, factory, prison, village is without its theatre. And this leaves out of all account the street plays, the mysteries, the historic cycle plays, in which as many as 80,000 people, many of them spectators, take part."



In the storming of the Winter Palace at Petrograd, all barriers went down in blood and flame. The worker involuntarily became educator and artist. Untrained, he must train others, and instinctively he turns to the most primitive form of teaching—drama. In streets and squares, in factories and shops, on thousands of improvised stages, he re-enacts the mighty events which have resulted in his bewildered awakening. Through rude plays, often pantomimic, he explains—perhaps unconsciously attempts to justify—the Revolution, through emphasizing his wrongs in the past, his hopes for the future; expresses, too, his bold delight in the new

order, in humor which has the slapdash of the circus. The Slavic passion for self-expression possesses him; streets, squares, and theatres seethe with the people's drama. The traditional playhouses, seventy of them left, fighting to maintain old material, old methods, cannot combat the red tide. Their plays by Chekov, Gorki, Tolstoi are of the old life and continue to draw an old audience. But the New Russian will have none of them. He will have revolt literature from all ages—Byron's "Cain," Schiller's "The Robbers," Rolland's "Danton," Toller's "Masse Mensch"—but for the most part he will create his own drama out of the life about him.

This passionate outpouring is at first entirely from the workers; but the new government soon recognizes that this tremendous activity can be harnessed for the good of the state. The Proletcult is enthroned in a palace, and all of its plans for fostering proletarian culture, for encouraging workingmen to express themselves through poetry, painting, and acting, are endorsed. Pageants of school children, mass demonstrations of workers, club performances in schools, café performances by strolling players, all meet with favor of the state. Wagon loads of actors from the Proletcult go from village to village enacting plays for thousands of peasants who are for the first time in history considered worth feeding propaganda. Special trains, brilliantly decorated with flaming posters, go through the provinces, to the Wrak, to the lower Volga, to Hindustan, carrying cinemas, printing presses, libraries, theatres,—all preaching the doctrine of the Third Internationale, and the emancipation of the worker. In a village near Moscow I watch a production entitled "Finding Their Place," a play which I am told was conceived by the peasants, though it suggests to me a crude version of Maiahovsky's "Mysteria Bouffes."

We sit in the village hall, crowded to suffocation with stolid, attentive peasants. The windows, needless to say, are hermetically sealed, and the flickering oil lamps increase the aroma, which becomes a tangible thing and dwells among us. The stage, at the end of the room, is separated from us by screens covered by wall newspapers, so popular in Russia. These papers, written by hand in the schools, are the entr'acte diversion, some of the wits of the village reading portions aloud to the amusement of the rest.



When the screens are removed, ragged workers with broken tools come in, fighting with fat, well dressed gentlemen whom I take to be capitalists. (In Russia anyone who possesses excess *avoiropois* or excess clothing is presumed to be a capitalist.) The fat gentlemen knock the workers into a portion of the stage which certain properties reveal as hell; but after a prolonged struggle they clamber out, and chase the rotund ones off the stage. The next scene is in heaven, where the workers are greeted affably by angels who take away their broken tools and give them food and drink. At first the workers recline at ease, but presently they become bored with this divine state of leisure, and in spite of the distress of the angels they go forth in search of "their place." The next scene is a schoolroom where, in small seats meant for children, the workers are laboriously learning to read and write. At the sight of the great hulking bodies bent laboriously over copybooks, the audience stirs, a slow sigh passes through the room. . . . For the first time I sense in a dim way the fact that in Russia to-day millions of men and women are being taught to read and write. . . . The next scene shows the peasants in conference with State officials, saying that they have now become good citizens, and that they demand the tools of citizenship; tools which are given them quite literally in the final scene, in which most of the stage space is occupied by gleaming farm machines. The workers enter, leap triumphantly upon the machines, and shout the song, in which the audience joins:

. . . and the international army shall be the human race.

At Trade Union or Factory theatres, the Blue Blouses, workers by day and actors by night, perform original acrobatic plays. I remember seeing three men and three girls glorify workers of the Army, the Navy, the farms, and the factories. As sailors, they climbed an imaginary rigging; as soldiers they marched and wheeled and turned in a stirring exhibition of military manoeuvres; as peasants they planted, reaped, and stored the grain, with a slow, swinging rhythm suggestive of a vast expanse of steppes; as factory workers they controlled machines with dynamic energy. Each motif reached its

climax in a refrain taken up by the audience, a refrain consisting of the repetition of a single word, the big word—COMRADE—half sung, half shouted: "Tovarisch! Tovarisch! Tovarisch!"

The effect of this exuberance was an amazing impression of having seen, not three men and three girls in an amateur song and dance, but a forest of ships with sailors in the rigging, a battalion of soldiers, a commonwealth of farm and factory hands all linked in a comradeship of work.

All of these stages, professional, semi-professional, and amateur, in cities, villages, farms, schools, factories throughout Russia, are the tributary forces of the theatre which finds its highest expression in the Zon. Under Meierhold, the great unwieldy mass of worker-material, worker-acting, worker-designing is fused into art. In Meierhold, the new theatres of Russia find not only a leader, but an epitome of the belief which they desire to express.



A man of the theatre for the past twenty-five years, Meierhold has perfect command of the technique which is the foundation of art. A revolutionist who fought in the Red Army, he has proved himself ready to die for the principles he is now expressing on the stage. A student of drama in many parts of the world, his theatre can express the international aspect which is the dream of the Soviet. Believing with religious fervor in the theatre as a place where author, actor, and spectator are magically fused, he has the power of imbuing others with this belief. This tall man with a shock of gray brown hair tossed carelessly back from a face at once magnetic and sinister, meets with electrical response from his actors. He is as dynamic as one of his own machines, as free and released as his own stage. The genius of Meierhold, however, is drawn not only from an inner luminosity, but from an extraordinary theatrical experience. He exemplifies that hard saying in art that originality comes through the absorption of the ideas of others. During four years of acting under Stanislavsky he learned how to conceive a part internally and project it with infinite detail and exactitude; how to make each actor even in a mob personalize his rôle and create it from the inside out; how to use realism as it has seldom been used on any stage. Later, having left the Moscow Art Theatre because he could not find there the close relationship he desired between actor and audience, he tried many experiments in Petrograd, Tiflis, and Minsk; conditionalism, stylization, mysticism, any one of which he can now use when he so desires. In Italy he became engrossed in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and his knowledge of the form is felt in the inimitable clowning of his actors and in the tragedy which often underlies the comic mask. During his visit to Greece he was influenced by a study of the function of the chorus, and the ancient use of the mask; both of these elements he now reflects at will. Meierhold has met with practically every form of theatrical art for the past quarter of a century, and like Ulysses, he has become a part of all that he has met.



The task of his actors, drawn from many provinces and many fields of labor, is to build a theatre which shall train a vast audience, unaccustomed to theatre going, in the principles of communism. The struggle that Russia is making for a universal culture is bigger than anything art can say about it. Art must serve this thing bigger than itself. Forty to sixty percent of all theatre seats are sold at low rates to the trade unions and passed on for a nominal price to the workers. Hard that the intelligentsia, the former bourgeoisie must pay more than the worker? Yes, but the greatest need must be met first. In the ideal state, theatre seats will be free for all, but in working toward that goal, the state will subsidize all theatres, and accommodate first those who have in the past been denied theatre going.

This theatre, which is to train a social order, is not interested in individual problems. What does the man making a new world care for the little personal love or hate or struggle of some insignificant person? He is concerned with the social struggle. If the old stage forms, painted scenery, built sets, drapes, remain, the spectator will interpret the play as he used to in the pre-revolutionary theatre. He will see, by habit, an individual conflict, where the revolutionary stage wishes him to see a social conflict. So with the passing of the little struggles of insignificant people, pass the little insignificant rooms

in which these struggles took place. Constructivism comes about in Russia not primarily because of any idea of the effectiveness of illustrating the climaxes and rhythms of a play by the use of swings, seesaws, ladders, but because drama has burst its bounds.

The new drama is not written, painted in words, or decorated, but constructed, almost, it might be said, by dramatist, actor, and audience. The stage, then, will not be painted or decorated either, but will be constructed by elements of reality from every day life. It will use realism when a local situation is in point, as in "Roar, China!", but in general the stage will be left unlocalized, for actors who wear their own working clothes.

The actor must not become an imagined character, because that would be to set up again the false standard of a stage which pretends to be something it is not. He must not become an abstract idea, as in expressionism, because this is not the age of abstractions, but of realities and machines. His acting is not classic, romantic, or realistic. He throws aside all these traditions. There is freedom in his flesh. He is an actor using the play as a ball to be tossed now to another actor, now to the audience; he is a super-machine, his movements attaining a rhythmic beat of power and precision; he is a worker, a part of the social order he illustrates on the stage.



The most revealing expression of Russia's theatre, however, cannot be compressed within four walls. . . The stage for the anniversary celebration of the revolution is Red Square, which nine years ago witnessed the bombardment of the Kremlin in that terrible October. To-day the old Chinese Wall is flaming with scarlet banners of the hammer and the scythe. The minarets of St. Basil look down upon a vast crowd gathered from all Russia, and upon the Soviet forces drawn up, infantry and horse, rank on rank. Evergreen is upon the tomb of Lenin whose spirit walks abroad.

In this drama of remembrance the Gate of Salvation is to play a part; that proud gate before which in other days each passerby was forced to remove his hat before the frescoes representing the Redeemer. As the hour of nine strikes, the bells in the tower of the Gate of Salvation chime out in the Russian Revolutionary Funeral March. There is profound silence, tribute to the dead, a silence broken only when the band strikes up the Internationale. Then the crowd surges forward, breaks into excited comment, and the parade starts.

First the infantry, company after company—marching, marching—regiments from the Ukraine, regiments from the Volga, regiments from the Caucasus, regiments from Siberia, from Bessarabia, from Georgia and Armenia; inscrutable yellow faces of the regiments from Manchuria; Persian regiments with sabres from Irania and Turkestan. . . . Marching, marching, with fixed bayonets, while the gunholes in the old wall flash red and drip red of banner and of flag.

On comes the cavalry, the most superb horses in the world, gorgeous horses, proud horses. On come the horsed regiments from all Russia; Turks from the five million Tartars, on grey horses with sabres flashing, as they charge down the hill to the river; giant Kalmucks from the Lower Volga, on giant horses; Finns and Moravians from the Middle Volga; mountaineers under the blue and white pennons of the Caucasus dashing at breakneck speed down the cobbled streets, with now and then a horse madly plunging past the regiment. Thunder of hoofs. . . . Thunder on the Left?

Now come processions of school children, young Pioneers under the red flag; wagon loads of Octobryata, "Little Lenins," too small to walk but waving flags and garlands from eager hands. Tanks and cannons come rumbling by, farm machines drawn by work horses; and finally, the workers, chief part of this strange procession, which seems not so much a celebration of the past as a symbol of the present, a prophecy of the future. Workers from the farms, from the factories, from the trade unions; workers under banners, and workers under posters; workers drawn from the audience, which now dissolves, as spectators become actors and march along with their comrades; and when the formal procession ends, from intersecting squares still come the workers. Throughout the day, all Russia walks proudly in the streets of her capital under her red flag. Throughout the day the ancient palaces re-echo to the refrain which, once heard, is never forgotten:

"Arise, Arise, Arise, Ye Slaves."

Is it, after all, new, this Theatre of the Revolution? Or is it, in spite of obvious differences in material and manner, a return to an old, old theatre? To the uncurtained stage on the hillside, to a drama forged from a belief which audience and actor shared? In the idea of Communism, the theatre in Russia has what the Greek stage had in the gods, what the medieval drama had in the church—a force outside itself to which it pays tribute with religious ecstasy. The theatre of the Revolution pours plays as libations before the altar of its belief. It is a great theatre because it is a dedicated theatre.

The House of Childhood

CAMBRIC TEA. By REBECCA LOWRIE. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by RACHEL FIELD

THIS reminiscence of a mid-western childhood some twenty odd years ago, is unusual in that it is written in the third person and without the haze of sentimentality which so often clouds books of this type. Artistically this is an advantage. It is a relief not to be expected to shed tears over childish woes or to glow with what the rhetoric books used to call "the pleasure of recogni-



REBECCA LOWRIE

tion" over early triumphs. But on the other hand, the reader misses a certain warmth, which is conspicuously lacking in this sharply-etched series of memories.

Those who are looking for another "Golden Age" or for some comfortable recital of childhood's happy hours, will not find it here. There is far more tragedy and bitterness and disillusion than in many volumes twice its size. And the very intensity of the child's bewilderment and baffled suffering has only made Mrs. Lowrie more determined not to allow feeling of any sort to creep in. Almost monotonously she handles her character, with a restraint that at times cramps her in what she is trying to express. It is as if she were afraid we might accuse her of liking this clever, unchildish child she has recreated. Perhaps the condensed quality of her style and the structure of the story itself are in a large part responsible for this. Mrs. Lowrie has not fallen into the usual habit of branching out into long descriptions; she does not go into too great length over unimportant incident. She has pared down to essentials, and the result is clear, really distinguished writing, uncluttered with details. No literary slovenliness here; all is ordered and polished to fit an admirable pattern, and yet, it often leaves one cold.

To be sure the child into whose mind and small world we are projected was a cold child. She must have been very trying to have around the house, and personally we much prefer knowing her between book covers than in the flesh. We are glad we didn't live next door to her to be studied by her inquisitive eyes and found wanting. For she found nearly everything wanting in the life and people about her. With the exception of her nurse, her little brother who died, and her pet toad, we cannot remember many outgoing emotions towards those with whom she came in contact. She weighed and measured, and most were discarded. This makes interesting, if slightly chilling reading. Probably the little girl was unconsciously rebelling against the Pollyanna

edicts of her day. Certainly she was analytical beyond her years, with a genius for discovering the shams and makeshifts of her elders. Sensitive, in a household of more obvious, self-satisfied adults, this child's rebellions and inhibitions, both maternal and religious, are certainly thought-provoking. One begins to feel uneasy, wondering just how many complex, superior little personalities like this are reacting to the life about them in just such prosperous, apparently sympathetic homes as this one was supposed to be.

We particularly liked Mrs. Lowrie's handling of the child's first contact with death. Here the lack of sentiment was a distinct advantage. It is simple and keen, this sudden realization that people do not go away; that they lie in the parlor dressed in white with something strange and inexplicable about them. There is no hedging or bluffing here, the child goes straight to the core of the tragedy, as children do. This is one of the best chapters in the book, far more real and moving than when she becomes involved in trying to give us an insight into the little girl's religious beliefs and scruples. Like all oversensitive children, she took scripture texts literally, and with dire results to the Faith of her Fathers, and yet through all her agnostic experimentation she remained a singularly austere small Puritan.

One charming chapter about the rearing of an altar to a heathen God is slightly reminiscent of the Kenneth Graham manner, and another that tells of the loss of a pet toad and the pangs of young conscience over this is also excellently managed. In the delightful little foreword to the book, Mrs. Lowrie is at her best:

"The house of childhood," she writes, by way of setting her mood and scene, "is not a house of many mansions. It is a house of little rooms, whose doors are ready to swing open at the gentlest touch, sometimes even to swing open of themselves.

"There is nothing mysterious about this, as about other abandoned houses. Little familiar things are always stirring about among the shadows, playing games in the corners, thinking the thoughts you used to think. And once you have gone inside you feel quite cozy and snug, as though you had never been away.

"So you set to work dusting off the chairs and tables and putting the tea set to rights in the cupboard, and making the sea shells march in a straight row across the mantelpiece. . . ."

Mrs. Lowrie almost lives up to this delectable promise, but not quite. To use a rather far-fetched metaphor, it is as if she had allowed her adult, critical attitude to hold the reins of her past too tight. Restraint, if overworked, may produce a sense of flatness, and with all its excellence one feels this more than once in reading "Cambric Tea." Indeed, in so beautifully planned and skillfully executed a book as this, one cannot help wishing that the child's emotions had broken through the author's pattern oftener.

Nothing could be more in keeping with the text than the charming format that the publishers have given it. Such altogether satisfactory printed calico covers and bright green labels deserve special mention.

The English attitude toward book-buying was recently vigorously attacked by one calling himself "Peter Ibbetson," in the *London Nation and Athenaeum*. He said in part:

"There are, of course, many homes in which books play no part. A large proportion of the population is content to read only a daily paper and an occasional magazine. That is an intelligible attitude. It is not my present purpose to criticise those educated illiterates who have no use for books. But there is another great section of the middle class which does read and value books. My quarrel is with them. They are not paying their way. They are sponging on writers and publishers, and making it impossible to supply at a reasonable price and a fair profit the commodity they consume. They read books, but they do not buy them. In a large number of fairly prosperous homes, where expenditure upon dress, locomotion, and entertainment is permitted on a generous scale, the buying of a book is frowned upon as a piece of wanton extravagance. 'Are there no circulating libraries?' it is asked. 'Can you not borrow the book from a friend or consult it in a school, college, or public library?' There is a note of severe moral disapproval in the family criticism of expenditure on books, which makes the delinquent feel that he is grossly self-indulgent . . . the fellow has made a fool, if not a beast, of himself."