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## The New Books Fiction

(Continued from preceding page)

though, who will not be grieved by the echo, but will be grateful for tales of the sea by one who knows. They can be safely recommended. Captain Marmur knows and loves his ship; loves and dreads his sea; and what is more, he gets all this across. On shore, as he frankly confesses, he is a little less happy. Only one reservation must be made. He indulges in endless

comment (like Conrad, but with a difference!) and one sometimes longs that he would get on with his story a little faster.

**QUICKSAND.** By NELLA LARSEN. Knopf. 1928. \$2.50.

Put together to a large extent from autobiographical materials, Miss Larsen's story of the life and struggles of a mulatto woman, the daughter of a negro man and a Scandinavian woman, is no more than mildly interesting. It has a distinctly cosmopolitan touch, as its principal character moves from Tuskegee, called Naxos in the book, to the upper circles of Copenhagen society, from Copenhagen to New York, and from New York back to a little Alabama town as the wife of a typical negro minister of the revivalistic type.

Miss Larsen is herself the daughter of a negro by a Danish woman, and most of the important incidents of the book follow her own life closely. She herself is married to a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Michigan, however, and it is in her one direct departure from her own life story as the framework of her book that she becomes wholly unconvincing. She would have us believe that her young and attractive mulatto woman, after life has failed to please her, could fall in love with and marry a man far beneath her in every respect and be willing to bear his children—one a year—and to endure the unutterable stupidity of an Alabama village.

A great love even between two people so different as her Helga Crane and the Reverend Mr. Pleasant Green might account for such strange behavior, but there is nothing to indicate that any such feeling exists.

The silly assertion on the jacket of the book that "it is almost the only Negro novel of recent years which is wholly free from the curse of propaganda" indicates, it appears to this reviewer, that the jacketer has not read much of the new fiction dealing with the negro. Most of it is altogether free from propaganda, freer indeed, than Miss Larsen's book.

The style of the book is well-mannered and touched here and there with beauty. But its chief interest lies in the fact that its principal character is a person of a quite unusual mixture of blood rather than in what she does or says or what happens to her.

**THE VIRGIN QUEENE.** By HARFORD POWELL, JR. Little, Brown. 1928. \$2.

This novel begins, happily enough, with a quotation from Sheridan and gracious acknowledgments to such personages, real and imagined, as Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe, Mr. Ellery Sedgwick, and Barnham Dunn. Mr. Howe and Mr. Sedgwick give the book an air of scholarship and authority, and Barnham Dunn gives it a central figure. He is the hero, a successful advertising man who goes to England on a sort of sabbatical year and writes a play about Queen Elizabeth in blank verse so beautiful and true to the time and manner of Shakespeare that Dunn and a British coadjutor perpetrate a gigantic hoax. The whole world, from Oxford to Broadway, swallows "The Virgin Queene" as a lost masterpiece of Shakespeare.

The misadventures consequent upon the hoax are not less probable than that such a play could be written and palmed off on the experts, by so complete a modern as the author of optimistic little essays on Progress, and Radio, and Owning Your Own Home. But Mr. Powell does not seek very hard for credibility. He just asks us to go along with him and see what happens.

"The Virgin Queene" is not a pretentious novel. It is distinctly "light," hitting off national traits, British and American, by bringing into juxtaposition such characteristic specimens of the two civilizations as Dunn, the high priest of American optimism, and Oxford scholars with bad manners and unfathomable erudition.

Mr. Powell has made his hero, Dunn, incredibly naive, which is the conventional way of treating the American innocent abroad. To this convention he has added the refinement of making Dunn an advertising man and popular journalist, a facile inspirational writer brewing strong magic for the masses, sometimes cynical, sometimes victimized by his own unctious. Now an editor, Mr. Powell himself has been in advertising, associated with the advertising firm of Barton, Durstine & Osborn. His book, "The Virgin Queene," is an amusing and whimsical tale told rapidly and with considerable urbanity.

**THE THREE DAYS' TERROR.** By J. S. Fletcher. Clode. \$2 net.

**WHAT WOMEN FEAR.** By Florence Riddell. Lippincott. \$2.

**BLUE MURDER.** By Edmund Snell. Lippincott. \$2.

**FLAME OF THE DESERT.** By Joseph B. Ames. Duffield. \$2 net.

**PIRATE'S FACE.** By Norval Richardson. Little, Brown. \$2.50 net.

**THE MAGIC SKIN.** By Honoré de Balzac. (Beacon Library.) Little, Brown. \$2 net.

**FLORIAN SLAPPEY GOES ABROAD.** By Octavius Roy Cohen. Little, Brown.

**COUSIN BETTE.** By Honoré de Balzac. (Beacon Library.) Little, Brown. \$2 net.

**NINETY-THREE.** By Victor Hugo. (Beacon Library.) Little, Brown. \$2 net.

**BUSINESS THE CIVILIZER.** By Earnest Elmo Calkins. Little, Brown. \$3 net.

**IN SEARCH OF OUR ANCESTORS.** By Mary E. Boyle. Little, Brown. \$3.50 net.

**THE BONCHURCH EDITION OF THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.** Vol. XIX, Life; Vol. XX, Bibliography; Gabriel Wells.

**POLITICIANS AND MORALISTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.** By Emile Faguet. Little, Brown. \$4.50 net.

**THE STUMP FARM.** By Hilda Rose. Little, Brown. \$2 net.

**CROMWELL.** By G. R. Stirling Taylor. Little, Brown. \$4 net.

**LETTERS FROM MY MILL.** By Alphonse Daudet. (Beacon Library.) Little, Brown. \$2 net.

**OSTRICH EYES.** By Hilton Brown. London. Allen & Unwin.

**GREAT SHORT NOVELS OF THE WORLD.** Edited by Barrett H. Clark. McBride. \$5 net.

**THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY.** By Kay Cleaver Strahan. Doubleday, Doran. \$2 net.

**THAT GAY NINETIES MURDER.** By Foxhall Daingerfield. Doubleday, Doran. \$2 net.

**SHANGHAI INN.** By Frank L. Packard. Doubleday, Doran. \$2 net.

**THE MIND BEHIND THE UNIVERSE.** By Theodore A. Miller. Stokes. \$1.50.

**ALICE IN THE DELIGHTED STATES.** By Edward Hope. Dial. \$2.50.

**THE GREEN SHADOW.** By Herman Landon. Dial. \$2.

**THE GOLDEN SPUR.** By J. S. Fletcher. Dial. \$2.

**BIRD OF FREEDOM.** By Hugh Pendexter. Bobbs-Merrill. \$2.

## Miscellaneous

**EDUCATION IN UTOPIAS.** By GILDO MASSO. Teachers College, Columbia Univ., N. Y. 1927. \$1.50.

This volume is easily the most important work on Utopias which has yet appeared, being not, like most of the others, a mere history of the subject, but a thorough study of Utopian principles. The term "education," used as broadly as Mr. Masso uses it, covers not only the function of the school, but those of the home, the church, the state, and the community as a whole, however organized. None of the main issues of Utopianism is ignored. The striking result of Mr. Masso's study is that he finds, in all the leading Utopian schemes from Plato to Wells, an unquestionable tendency toward a substantial agreement on fundamental theses.

These theses may be summarized as the idea of the subordination of the individual to society, the active as opposed to the passive theory of government, belief in education as the main agency of social improvement, the doctrines of equality of opportunity and of equality of the sexes, eugenics, and, finally, the social theory of property whereby property rights are vested ultimately in the State. Furthermore, Mr. Masso has no difficulty in showing that all these main Utopian contentions are now generally accepted in theory and are being to an increasing degree adopted in practice.

**METEOROLOGY.** By D. Brunt. Oxford Press. \$1.

**A BOOK OF FRENCH WINES.** By P. Morton Shand. Knopf.

**FOREIGN ADVERTISING METHODS.** By Charles S. Hart. New York: The De Bower Publishing Co., Inc.

**COLLECTOR'S CHOICE.** By John T. Winterich. Greenberg. \$2.

**THE STORY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES.** By Edward Hungerford. Putnam.

**I GO A-FISHING.** By J. Brunton Blaikie. London: Arnold.

## Travel

**TAMBO.** By JAMES JENKINS. McBride. 1928. \$2.

"Tambo" is Spanish-American for way-side inn, and Mr. Jenkins attaches it to his Peruvian impressions because part of them are strung along a mule-back journey up into the high Sierras where *tambos* are few, but welcome when they come.

His aim appears to be to give the "feel" of Peru, both that of frivolous, sad old Lima, and of the provincial town and Indian country, and to do this he chooses a form which is neither "travel book" nor fiction, but a hybrid between the two, in which things are seen and felt through the senses of a young American named Joel.

Joel is sensitive to a good deal, and often rather intelligently, but for a gentleman with a Down East name he slings English at a great rate ("the green yet nostalgic

(Continued on page 900)

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## O GENTLE LADY





## On "Sets" of Books

By ALICE DALGLIESH

THERE are two reasons why I am interested in this question. The first of these reasons is Deborah. When Deborah was four years old her mother asked me to prescribe for a strange and alarming complaint—entire lack of interest in stories. "I suppose it is really my fault," the mother said. "Deborah has had very few individual books and all the stories I have read to her have been from a story collection that I bought when she was a baby. Perhaps you could help me to make stories interesting?" So, as the books of selected stories were illustrated in only two colors, we decided that Deborah had been starved for color and the first books we chose for her were colorful. There was "Poppy Seed Cakes" with its vivid pictures, "The Twins and Tabiffa," with charming child-like illustrations in full color, Leslie Brooke's amusing Three Bears, and some particularly gay Swedish picture-story books. It was almost certain that if Deborah had only made the acquaintance of stories in large, cumbersome volumes she would like some tiny books to carry around with her. We added to her library "Russian Picture Tales," the small editions of "Peter Rabbit" and "Little Black Sambo," and Rachel Field's cheerful little "Alphabet for Boys and Girls." This was just a beginning. Deborah's library has grown steadily and she loves books.

The other reason for my interest is that whenever I talk to a group of adults about books for children there are sure to be questions as to the advisability of buying some particular set of books. "Sets" seem to have a curious fascination for some of us. They look so well on the shelves in their neat liveries of blue or red or green. The material they contain is so comfortably selected and arranged and catalogued, and it relieves the owner of all responsibility for thinking or choosing!

Another explanation of the popularity of sets of books is the persuasive and persistent way in which they are advertised. The publishers of a "home library" or "home educator" put all their ingenuity and effort into getting that particular set of books before the public. They advertise widely and alluringly, making the most extravagant statements. They offer an attractive bonus and give brief courses in salesmanship so that their salesmen go out armed with arguments before which the ordinary human is powerless. Not so long ago a mother said to a friend of mine:

I'm very much worried. Yesterday a book agent came to the house and he said, when I refused to buy the expensive set of books he was selling, that I was criminally neglecting my child. Do you think I am?

A business man told me that on his return from the office one evening he found his wife regretting the fact that she had signed up for a set of books which the salesman had almost hypnotized her into believing to be essential to her child's education. The baby was then one year old!

This does not mean that all sets of books are undesirable or that they are always sold by unscrupulous methods. The question is entirely one of relative values. While some sets of books are almost worthless others are useful to those who can afford to buy them without being limited as to the purchase of other books. Take one of the best known and most widely advertised sets of books for children, "My Bookhouse." This is a set of five books containing stories for children of different ages. On the whole the stories are well selected and arranged but the books for older children are too fragmentary in their presentation of "bits" from the classics. If parents can afford it such a collection may supplement children's reading but as their main literary diet emphatically NO. Think what can be done with the fifty or sixty dollars that is the price of a set of books! This amount will buy twenty-five or thirty books each of which will have its own delightful individuality, its own type of illustration, its own gay cover. The friendly little Peter Rabbit book with its fascinating pictures means

far more to a child than Peter Rabbit as a story without individuality lost among others in a large volume. This also applies to books in series. Publishers tend to put out a series of classics in a uniform binding and a few of these go a long way. Look back to your childhood and think of the slim blue book that was "Alice in Wonderland," the stubby brown one that was "Robinson Crusoe," the worn green "Swiss Family." You found them on the shelves by their size and color, even now you can visualize their individuality of print and picture. Would you have had the same friendly feeling for them if they had been in a uniform edition? It is a question worth considering.

Perhaps the worst offenders are expensive sets of books which claim that they provide all the material necessary for "character-building." One of the most absurd of these includes a cross-cataloguing device by which one may find a story to fit every occasion. When a child tells a lie the appropriate character-building story will be found listed under "honesty" while if it is courage we wish to develop we must read him the stories listed under this heading! I have seen a little girl of five put her hands over her ears whenever she thought anyone was going to tell a story. She did this because her previous experience with stories had been "moral tales" told whenever she was naughty. There is no surer way to develop a dislike for literature than to use—or rather misuse—it in this way.

There are other sets of books besides those which present selections from literature and there is more excuse for the encyclopedic set than for any other. Children are animated question marks and somewhere there must be answers for their endless stream of questions. A well illustrated encyclopedia such as "Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia" or "The World Book" is an asset to a home in which there are children. "The Book of Knowledge" is very popular with children and with parents. It has its strong points; its weak ones are that it attempts to be a home educator as well as an encyclopedia and to give an introduction to almost every subject under the sun.

At least three or four "home educator" sets are now on the market under different and enticing names. Some of them may be of use to parents whose children cannot go to school. It is well, however, in considering a set of this kind to have the opinion and advice of some expert who can tell whether the material in the books is up-to-date and educationally sound. One attractive looking home kindergarten set is based on faulty psychology and presents methods of teaching that are fast becoming obsolete.

In general it is safe to be both critical and skeptical with regard to sets of books for they are too expensive to warrant experimentation.

Nowadays there are excellent books available to help those who wish to do their own selecting. Among these are:

THE CHILDREN'S READING. By Frances Jenkins Olcott. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.

This is a new edition of a reliable guide. A chapter on picture books and illustrators has been added and this should be helpful to those who are choosing books for younger children.

ADVENTURES IN READING. By May Lamberton Becker. Stokes. \$2.

A very delightful book which is intended to interest older boys and girls in the right kind of reading.

The Horn Book.

This is a magazine published four times a year by the Bookshop for Boys and Girls in Boston. It gives interesting and discriminating reviews of books for children and is well worth the subscription price of a dollar.

## GOOD BUT FORGOTTEN

ALTHOUGH my oldest brother and I had many books of our own when we were children, we looked with envious eyes upon the bookcase of our in-between-brother and set him apart in our minds as a person of real distinction—all this because he owned a slender volume bound in bright blue and printed with wide margins, called "The Gold Thread."

There were several reasons for its preciousness: first of all none of the neighborhood had ever heard of the book and so we could lend it with assured superiority.

Then it was written by Norman MacLeod in far-away Canada, and best of all it was so full of exciting and unusual adventure that we could read it over and over with always the same thrill. We would follow Eric through the forest where the gold thread pointed the path, and would hold our breath as he dropped it to pursue a silver-winged bird. Foolish! Of course we would never do that. Then on through storm and darkness to the robbers' castle where Eric was held a prisoner for two days, and then escapes by the help of Wolf, the swineherd. There are still many terrifying adventures ahead of him but we are glad to remember that at last he finds again the gold thread and is brought safely to his father's house.

This book was published in Toronto by the Rose Belford Publishing Company.

Another splendid book published much later but equally difficult to find nowadays is "The Secret of Old Thunderhead," by Louise Godfrey Irwin,—a story of mystery and adventure on a Vermont farm and the girls and boys who took part in it. Just the jolly description of everyday farm life is entertainment enough, but added to this is the finding of the secret cave, and the secret itself, which brings not only amazement but great happiness to this interesting Vermont family. A real book, about many real happenings in the author's childhood.

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