

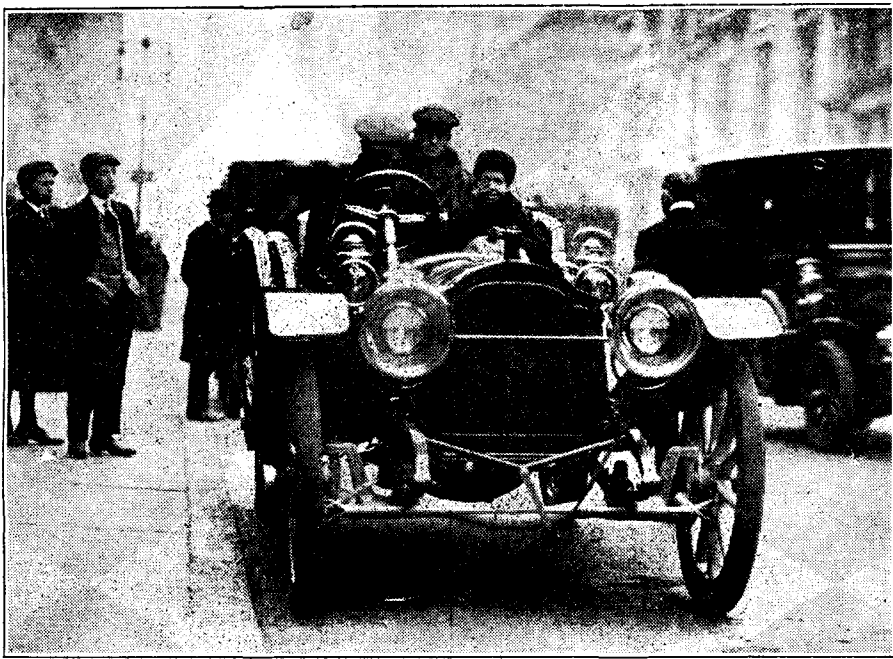
Life Began at 640

(Continued from first page)

tainly was to a curiously superficial reality. It is doubtless true that enlisting against his parents' wishes showed not only an adventurous spirit but a desire for something different, if not better, than his circumscribed life on Fifth Avenue, Newport, and the *North Star*;—it was vastly to his credit—an atavistic flashback perhaps to the vigorous outlook of his great-grandfather, the old "Commodore"; but it is questionable whether to one handicapped by his early environment as the author undoubtedly was, his new world was any more real than the old one had been. The superficiality of his judgments and the doubtful accuracy of many of his statements would indicate that it was not, but superficiality is perhaps to be expected from one who has "lived in every country of Europe, in Mexico, in Canada, in every corner of the United States," and "has known earls, emperors, millionaires and multi-millionaires, prelates and presidents," who "has motored half a million miles," including forty-five trips across the United States (several via Reno), and has decided that America prior to 1931 was bound straight for Hades, only to be miraculously saved by Franklin Roosevelt. He may be right about it. He is certainly right in his contention that the Roosevelt Highway is more representa-

conversation, gold plate, calling cards, and tall hats. Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish had led the revolt in the latter years of the last century with her court jester—Harry Lehr. The young folks carried it on. They positively refused to be bored or dictated to any longer. Even more important was the horde of new industrial millionaires who sprang up during the next decade and, unfettered by the old conventions, gave bigger, better, and jollier parties than had taken place before. Competition was too strong. Southampton became gayer than Newport. Society had grown too large to remain exclusive. Instead of one or, at most, two or three "royal courts" there were fifteen or twenty. Chaperonage was rapidly vanishing, largely due to the motor. By 1913 New York had capitulated to the industrial rich just as the older Knickerbocker Society had been crashed by the "Silver Gilt" in the seventies and eighties. The circle had come round again. Park Avenue had said farewell to Fifth Avenue and Fifth Avenue had no alternative but to pull in its skirts and look haughty, which was well enough for the fathers and mothers, but the children went and played on Park.

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as New York Society any longer. The Fifth Avenue which Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., describes as breaking up in 1931 had dissolved a generation before—only he does not know it. In spite of its wealth and



CORNELIUS VANDERBILT, JR., IS TAKEN FOR A RIDE
The author as a boy, shown with his father, General Cornelius Vanderbilt.
Brown Bros. photo, from "Farewell to Fifth Avenue."

tive of America than Fifth Avenue. One does not question his sincerity, but if his general conclusions are no sounder than those relating to his own social class they may be readily dismissed. The society in which he was brought up may have been as foolish, dull, selfish, and pretentious as he depicts it; but the reader is at once struck by the author's delusion that the framework of New York Society in which he figured remained unshaken until the last election.

He uses the title "Farewell to Fifth Avenue" as indicating that what smashed the reign of the older social leaders of New York and Newport was the economic cataclysm of the depression and the fear of bloody "revolution." It is perhaps natural that he should suppose that the social world of Fifth Avenue continued—even after he had left it—to have the importance he had been brought up to believe it to have. But it argues an extraordinary obtuseness and ignorance upon his part. Perhaps the taint was still on him. It may be yet. At any rate it will probably surprise this thirty-seven year old pseudo-social-historian to be told that what he calls "the break up" of Fifth Avenue Society, instead of occurring in 1931, began about the year he was born (1898) and had been pretty well completed before the World War. As a Vanderbilt he may object to the statement that the feudal structure of New York Society really ended with Mrs. Astor and Mrs. Ogden Mills and that what went on thereafter was but an empty shell. It was not any economic depression that decapitated the Crowned Heads, but the boredom of a younger generation with heavy dinners and heavier

its European entanglements it had been essentially a bourgeois society with the virtues of the bourgeoisie—composed of kindly, rather dull people, who wished above all things to be respectable and who, with minor exceptions, were so.

All of which is merely by way of prelude to saying that Mr. Vanderbilt's two lists, one of the 75 who form the "backbone of American Society" and the other of the 150 "in the outer fringe" who are "invited in after dinner," are utter nonsense. God knows where he got them. Certainly not from his mother's secretary. He has, in fact, sadly mixed the "Musts" and the "Mays" even from the point of view of 640 Fifth Avenue.

How the ghosts of the Knickerbockers must laugh! Has he forgotten that there were once "Four Hundred" whom no less an authority than the great Mr. Ward McAllister decreed as eligible for Mrs. Astor's exclusive lists? And now Mr. Vanderbilt, Jr., cuts it to 225 on the very outside! It certainly goes to show how Fifth Avenue Society had already shrivelled by 1929!

I can imagine a few soreheads but I cannot believe that the socially libelled will feel very badly about it. One can joyously forgive Mr. Vanderbilt, Jr., for being "a traitor to his class"—a phrase in which he only too ostentatiously glories—but it is harder to forgive his disloyalty to his parents. It is distinctly what used to be known in newspaper parlance as "a mean write-up."

With these qualifications Mr. Vanderbilt's hot-headed autobiography, if not taken seriously, makes lively and often entertaining reading.

A Story of Disillusion

FORGIVE ADAM. By Michael Foster.
New York: William Morrow & Co. 1935.
\$2.

Reviewed by CURRIE CABOT

HERE is something extraordinarily satisfactory about the writing of "Forgive Adam." Mr. Foster's masculine, unadorned prose is the prose of a born writer and a born observer. Moreover, it is that of a writer who has thought and worked over his craft. He can strike off, in a sharp detail or two, a whole reality that will submerge the reader in its sound and smell, and light or darkness. He is one of the rare writers who could dispense with the necessity of a "plot," who should, perhaps, follow some deep and organic unfolding of character and life, and not bother about the careful plotting of a story. For the intrigue and excitement of "Forgive Adam" lie upon it with the extraneous glitter of oil upon a pool. What is really interesting is Mr. Foster's understanding of human beings, and the simple, pitying depth of his feeling for their suffering and their weakness. We are more interested in the consciousness of Anton Corneil, the principal character of the book, than in the actual facts of the melodrama in which he becomes involved.

Anton Corneil is a character peculiarly adapted to reveal Mr. Foster's sense of life. He had been a more than ordinarily sensitive boy, who, frightened by the world's "careless brutalities," had learned "to pretend that he was callous and indifferent and courageous as the rest of men." He is a tired, disillusioned newspaper man, and life in all its sordidness passes before his eyes. His wife has left him, and he is going through a personal unhappiness which gives him acute insight into the sufferings of other people. He has feeling, beneath his defensive armor of light, bitter mockery, but frustration paralyzes him, leaving him powerless to help himself or anyone else. We are given glimpses of his past life which make us wish to know more about him, and leave us feeling that the book is merely a sketch of the biographical novel it might have been.

Mr. Foster has a trace of the human pity and understanding of the Russians. This is not to say that we feel he has been influenced by Dostoevsky, when certain pages of "Forgive Adam" bring Dostoevsky to our minds. It is simply to recognize that Mr. Foster has a remote but innate kinship with the nineteenth century Russian writers. The book is actually singularly free, in its style, from "influences," for the author's phrases are struck fresh from his own mint. His dialogue has an individual ring, and most of the characters are real enough to possess the unpredictability of live beings. Certain figures, who are overdrawn in their hypocrisy and wickedness, owe their creation simply to the necessities of the plot, and increase our sense of its hollowness. These actual movers of the story seem, curiously, more irrelevant than some others whose quiet existence influences nobody.

Two Authors in Search of a Character

CAST DOWN THE LAUREL. By Arnold Gingrich. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE STEVENS

THIS is a novel within a novel. In the first part, "Prelude to a Romance," the author supplies notes for a book of fiction to be written by his fictitious friend, Wakefield Speare. These notes consist of biographical material and sketches of the members of a musical colony in a small Michigan city. Part II, "Apollo's Young Widow," is the novel Wakefield Speare writes. This is followed by "Postlude to a Romance," in which the original author takes "Apollo's Young Widow" apart and shows how the fiction has cheapened and falsified the reality.

This may sound complicated; the book is, however, highly entertaining. And although some readers may find the character sketches of the first part a monotonous way of beginning a story, the story itself is a good one. It involves Telec, an Aus-

trian pianist who has abandoned a meteoric career at its height, to bury himself in the Michigan city where he establishes a music school. The reason is that he is a perfectionist: beautifully as he plays, he can never play the music exactly as it sounds in his head. Under his influence comes Chalice, a local child prodigy, who grows up to share Telec's "occupational disease" of perfectionism, to become another mute inglorious Milton of the keyboard, and, incidentally, to fall in love with him. Other characters are Telec's wife, who guards the shrine without requition, and the various students, teachers, and hangers-on who make a Sanger's Circus of the place, and keep the reader amused.

The central theme is, of course, the personality and character of Telec, the attempt to analyze what it is that constitutes his kind of genius. Usually when a novelist attempts to create a genius, the qualities of genius have to be assumed by the indulgent reader. Mr. Gingrich does better than that, but he does it at the expense of his novel. Most of his space is devoted to showing how not to do it; this seems to be the point of inserting "Wakefield Speare's" novel, which comes in for a good deal of deservedly adverse criticism in the Postlude. For "Apollo's Young Widow" is a melodramatic distortion of the material, very slick and readable, but definitely bad from any other point of view. Mr. Gingrich somewhat disarms criticism by making all the criticisms himself, but he leaves one with the feeling that he has, after all, only been setting up elaborate ten-pins to knock down. In fact, the whole thing seems to be about as ingenious an arrangement of plus and minus quantities as ever added up to zero.

But it is ingenious. It's clever, it keeps moving, it's worth reading because it's amusing. And one does get, in the characters, at least part of what Mr. Gingrich is driving at. But one might have got considerably more if he had put it across as a novelist and not as a combined novelist and literary critic.



"Wump"

Or First Aid for the Hostess

By AMABEL WILLIAMS-ELLIS

WHEN we first evolved Wump, we called it The Dictionary Game. We now play it in the following way, using either the Concise or the Shorter Oxford Dictionary. One player reads out, let us say, this entry from the Concise Dictionary:

Wump, noun, heavy, partly carnivorous thick furred plantigrade quadruped: rough, unmannerly person, whence Wumpish, Wumpishness; Great, Little, Wump, northern constellations; Stock Exchange speculator for a fall, one who sells stock for future delivery hoping to buy it cheap meanwhile and therefore tries to bring prices down. Cf. bull and see foll:—Wumps-breach, acanthus; Wumps-foot, kinds of hellibore; Wump garden, scene of tumult, Wumps-grease, pomade; Wumpskin, Guard's tall furry cap; Wump-leader, travelling tutor.

This definition is from the Concise Dictionary. Had the Shorter Dictionary been used the players would have had derivations, quotations, dates, and a host of "figs," and transferred derivative meanings, to help them to discover that in this particular case the mystic word Wump stands for Bear. This is a fireside game, and any number of people (children or grown-ups) can play. The reader in choosing what definitions to read must judge the mental age of the players and not choose words that are too easy or too difficult. He must also be quick in translating the dictionary abbreviations. When he has chosen a word and begins to read the definition, of course he substitutes Wump each time the word appears, modifying it in the same way as the real word—Wumping—Wumped, etc.

The other players have to guess what Wump stands for, and each player scores by the number of words he guesses right. As soon as any player thinks he knows

what the word is he puts up his hand, but the reader goes on to the end unless all have their hands up before he has finished. If a hasty player guesses wrong, he does not score. The reader only scores if no one can guess the word, in which case he scores as many points as there are players. But, and this is important, if any one among the players has never heard the word before, the reader is considered to have chosen too difficult a word and no one scores at all for that round.

Some very simple words are excellent, even for the most sophisticated players, because they have obsolete or unusual meanings as well as the current ones which throw players off the scent. Take the following for example; it is from the Shorter Dictionary:

Wump. (substantive) Middle English, Old Northern French. (1) a basket (originally made of rushes) especially for carrying or catching fish. Now dialect. (2) a cream cheese or the like (originally made in a rush basket or served on a rush mat); now a dish consisting of curds sweetened and flavoured, served with a layer of scalded cream on the top (1460). (3) any dainty sweetmeat, cake or confection; a kickshaw (1764). (4) a feast or banquet; also (now only in the United States) an outing at which eating and drinking are prominent; a picnic party (1530).

"With these Wumps and feasts they joyined the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Vines)." *Wump* (verb) (1555). (1) to hold a banquet or feast; to make merry with good cheer; also (chiefly United States) to go on a pleasure excursion. (2) (transferred) to entertain, feast. H. Walpole. "The Chancellor had intended to go Wumping on the Rhine." Greville.

The dictionary has more to say, but this is perhaps enough for the present reader of this article. Has he perhaps by now guessed that the word is "junket"?

The Concise Dictionary has many pleasant short definitions suitable for young players, the only drawback being that here there are no illustrative quotations.

Wump. (noun) a snake-like fish; (figurative) slippery creature; (popular) minute animal found in vinegar or sour paste; Wumpbuck: Wumpspear (for transfixing Wumps; hence Wumpy).

This word is of course fairly obviously "eel" and would be too easy for experienced players. But the rule against "hard" or very exotic words is most essential if the reader of the Shorter Dictionary is to be kept in check. All sorts of temptations abound. "Duppy"—a West Indian ghost, for instance, has too short a definition to afford any sport. "Flanch" is rather difficult and rather dull. "Obstupefy" is attractive, but must be avoided in most companies. So must "Loxodromic" (art of oblique sailing). The reader must remember that his duty is to show sport to the company as well as to score.

The writer can testify that Wump has beguiled many evenings in most worried circles. Once recently it came to the rescue when an extremely distinguished company had quarreled sharply on the subject of whether or not they were sick to death of Princess Marina's wedding. Conversation had died into an awful silence, but Wump (new to all but one) effectually rescued the evening.



HUANCA WOMEN SPINNING, BY JOSÉ SABOGAL

The BOWLING GREEN

XVII. Glimpses

IN a window in the Chrysler Building on Lexington Avenue is an aerial photograph of Misti, the sacred mountain at Arequipa. It isn't explained or identified in any way, but I'm sure it's the beautiful snow-tipped cone of Misti—which I haven't seen but of which one hears so much; it comes to be a symbol of all that is most beautiful in Peru. The nearest I got to Misti was a little garden café called La Mistiana, in a suburb of Lima. It is so named with intent; this is a *picantería*, specializing in sharp sauces and dishes à la Arequipeña. You eat in trellised and vine-grown summerhouses; there is a booth with guitar and piano for dancing; while waiting for the meal you play *sapo*. *Sapo* means toad: you try to toss brass disks into the mouth of a big bronze toad; missing the mark there are also various numbered pockets into which the counter may fall. Dr. José Galvez, poet and novelist, wrote down for me the names of the dishes. Most important was *chicha*, a kind of beer brewed from *maiz* (corn); the great national drink of Peru. It is served in very large glasses and tastes not unlike cider. (*Chicha y sapo* is the Peruvian equivalent for "beer and skittles.") The first dish was *choclo con queso*—corn on the cob with cheese. *Ocopa* was potatoes with a very strong pungent sauce. Then *Locro con arroz*. *Arroz* is rice; *locro*, an Inca specialty, is potatoes and pumpkins with peppers. I see *chupe à la arequipeña* noted: was *chupe* another of those incredibly nipping condiments? *Anticuchos* were hearts on a skewer, a platter almost alarmingly carnal. All these dishes, Dr. Galvez explained, were genuine Inca tradition; it was an *almuerzo archeológico*. I yearned to say, thinking of Don Marquis, that we were a little group of Serious Incas, but feared the allusion would not carry.

Past the impressive statue of Manco Capac (last king of the Incas), through fields of corn and cotton, along a fine new toll-road toward the mountains, then you turn off over rough gullies and a rickety trestle to the ruins of Cajamarquilla. The car splashes through a stream where castor oil bushes grow: these are pointed out to the *niñas* as a thrill of sentiment. The fog-bank of Lima is far behind; we are in a blaze of clear sun, air that tastes like the uplands of Burgundy. Row on row of huge brown hills, sharply profiled in the strong light, spread out in echelon each side the valley, like wings of scenery on a stage.

In a daze of empty curiosity you wander the maze of broken mud walls and mounds. Mr. L. P., the sagacious guide, takes post on a commanding summit lest any of his charges fall through into an un-

suspected pit. The friable soil, dry and treacherous, is honeycombed with deep graves and grained with specks of gold. The *niñas*, collecting this sparkling sand in matchboxes, believe their fortune is made. In the open burial chambers are shreds of mummy-cloth, figured cheeks of pottery, bones everywhere. The leg bones, desiccated flesh and sinew still adhering, are bent; the dead were set upright with knees tucked under chin. A sandy shelf above the old river bed is scattered with skulls and thighs. Under that antiseptic flood of sunlight, on the sandy bottom of an ocean of elapse, any sense of sacrilege is cauterized. I took two excellent teeth from an Inca jawbone as a curiosity for my dentist. But Newton's Third Law still operates: for now he tells me I have to lose two of my own.

Another Inca city, even more impressive, is Pachacamac, south of Lima. Through Miraflores, *pintoresco pueblecito*



THRESHING, BY CAMILO BLAS

with its lovely gardens and bougainvillias, through Chorrillos with its bold hill El Morro (*Morro* seems to mean much the same as Golgotha: a place shaped like a skull; a name of ill omen), then you pass among wide flat fields, steep sand dunes inland and the ocean surf bursting high on the right. The road, clayey and greasy, had a *patina* on it, said the driver; there was a constant impulse to beg him to drive *despacio*. An excellent word which you will need: it means dispassionately.

Pachacamac is also a space of brown desolation; on a hilltop above a river valley is a relic of old sanctity, the Temple of the Sun. Here Pizarro and his high pressure salesmen violated the innermost shrine for its jewels. At the top of a great flight of stone steps some humorist had placed a sardonic skull; but skulls and skeletons are commonplace by this time. Here are not just adobe walls but blocks of well cut stone, still showing patterns in red pigment. Under the brow of the hill, facing the sea, are a row of smoke blackened niches, where torches burned as light for Inca seamen. From below comes the even vibration of the huge Pacific surf, beating dull in the ears like the metronome of Time itself. Then, as you grope about in this wreckage of an unimaginable world, another steady pulse from overhead: the southbound Panagra plane.

Taking tea at Chorrillos with Peruvian friends. Our kind hostess spoke no English but we filled in gaps of conversation by admiring her baby. He is only a small infant, she said, courteously deprecating our homage. I got half way through a reply but stuck there. I wished to say that in Northamerica we say of every male child, some day he may be President.



THE MANTLE, BY JULIA CODESIDO

"Today he is very small," I remarked, "but . . ." Then I was stumped for the future subjunctive of the verb, *Hoy está chiquito*, I said, *perro* . . . and kept repeating the *perro*, gesturing at the infant and trying to hold the mother's attention while I searched for the rest of my idiotic sentence. *Perro*, I reiterated, gazing earnestly on the babe in arms; and saw her handsome eyes darken with trouble. Her husband screamed with mirth and came to our rescue. The word for *but* is *pero*; *perro* means dog.

Lima is not Peru, they keep telling you; you are constantly reproached for seeing nothing else; but the traveler could spend a busy month in the City of Kings and not exhaust its riches. I dare not even attempt to describe places like the monastery of San Francisco (which is not easy to get into) with its beautiful two-storey cloister, its crypts and old bell-towers cracked by earthquake. A young colored monk in a brown robe, with all the smiling kindness of his race, took me through the hellish old building; if I could have known his genealogy I should know more of the history of South America. Nowhere in Northern continent, and rarely in Europe, have I seen so impressive a relic of ancient pieties; been so aware of an atmosphere that denies the standards of life outside. I wondered if there were some disdainful symbolism in the great monkey-face knockers on the doors of the church. Did some old abbot wish to confront the intrusive world with the image of its own chattering face?

Homage to Lima, however imperfect, must mention the notable work being done at the quiet School of Fine Arts where José Sabogal is director. He and his pupils Julia Codesido and Camilo Blas are leading Peruvian painters back toward their native material; who see thrilling decorative pattern in their own landscapes and customs. Sabogal showed me one of his own paintings in which three blanketed Indian women, spinning as they walked, had fallen into an unconscious dance pattern of perfect balanced flow. One of Julia Codesido's canvases, an Indian nude, suggests in the sullen brooding face and full fecund body something of the soul of the land. The more minutely studied pictures by the brilliant young Camilo Blas, showing country tasks and festivals, are of remarkable humor and charm. His is a brush destined for great things. Señor Sabogal, to whom Carleton Beals has paid well-deserved tribute in *Fire on the Andes*, deals in powerful and sweeping effects; broad, even impatient, suggestion. Like all fine teachers he has encouraged his pupils to develop their own technique, and where they surpass him in skill none is more pleased than he. Sabogal studied in Spain and France; he was also in Mexico during the early days of her great painters' renaissance a dozen years ago; he likes to remember that Mexico and Peru have had parallel history in many ways. The canvases he showed me prophesy a new Peruvian feeling both strong and subtle, and proudly its own. I wish the Grace Line would bring up a roomful of these paintings and put them on show in New York.

(Concluded next week)

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.