

volve if they were high-level phenomena, has been detected. The peculiar law of the solar rotation persists without known change through the spot minimum, and all the evidence seems to favor the view that sun-spots are deep-seated manifesta-

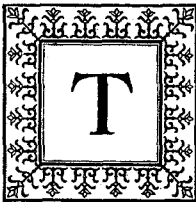
tions of the internal circulation of the sun. In these mysterious depths we should therefore seek for the origin of sun-spots, the nature of their characteristic cycle, and the cause of the periodic reversal of their magnetic polarity.

"Not Poppy——"

BY MCCREADY HUSTON

Author of "His," "Fairer Greens," "Jonah's Whale," etc.

ILLUSTRATION BY EUGENE C. CASSADY



TEN years passed before Carver Squires could bring himself to go home, and then his swift rush eastward was not in obedience to a new judgment of his case, but to a sudden numbness and bewilderment when, driving through a part of Indiana new to him, he caught a quality in the air from the fields and a certain blending of tones in the coloring on a hillside that brought the foothills back to him with an urge that even good sense, painfully acquired and long drilled, could not resist.

Now that he was home he was restless and distrustful of his action. Unquestionably he would have to flee again; would have to undergo all over the searing labor of obliteration that had made him look more than thirty-seven. His return was his first yielding to desire in ten years. He had thought he was in full control. Descending from the local train that had carried him the fifty miles south into the hills from the city where he had changed from the West, he had, with a grim smile, admitted to himself that the scent and colors of the hills were not the only reasons for his coming. Squires prized unmixed, true emotions; things a man could trust; senses which would not betray him. He was nettled, then, even irritated, to discover that twelve hours on trains with his thoughts—which would wing homeward ahead of him—had forced

him to the admission that Annice Moray—she was Vaness now—was, after all, at least part of the drawing force he had ascribed to the hills of home.

Looking from his window at the Big Savage Country Club next day he decided that the best thing he could do would be to borrow somebody's car, go for a slow, luxurious drive among the hills, and take the night train away. The club—it was a surprise for him to find it—was a note of the new day in the old town. Standing undetermined on the station step and surveying with aversion the old hotel across the street, he had been found by Howard Graham, a remote cousin, and urged to put up as a guest at the club. It fitted in; and Graham was not likely to be a troublesome host. So, instead of the precarious services of the hotel, comforts—more comforts than he desired—were at his disposal in a country club-house which invited nothing but rest.

The first moment after his rising had been memorably perfect as he stood at his window, gazing across the State Highway at the sweep of the golf course toward the Notch, miles away. The second moment had suggested to him sharply that he had better go, immediately.

The first person he saw on the lawn below was Jerome Vaness.

The curious thing about it was that Vaness did not look any older. Squires turned abruptly and regarded his own face, and particularly his graying hair, in the mirror. Then he looked out again at

Vaness. No; he looked the same as he had that day ten years ago when Squires last saw him, standing with Annice on the Morays' porch.

Except for a change of garb it might have been yesterday. Watching him, Squires had a curious sense of recalling something very old. It came to the surface of his mind at last. He had said to Annice that Jerome Vaness would never change. That was it—confirmation. He had not changed, and he never would.

Well, that was settled. He might as well go back. He had gained, would gain, nothing but perhaps new and more bitter memories.

The unexpected and almost unbelievably suitable ministrations of a colored boy on the porch where he found a table for breakfast suggested to Squires that it would be easy to stay. After all, he could trust himself to see Annice. He ought to call on her, he reflected, if manners and customs survived in any degree the destructive freedom he saw had come to the old countryside. He sat a long time over his coffee, pleased and amused to find in the colored boy the son of a steamboat negro he had known years ago. In fact, the boy remembered him; and when Squires alluded to the river days and the eating he had done on the old packet *Germania*, at the hand of Solomon Dyson, the young black expanded with local pride and special information.

A car, he said, might be had by telephoning to town, and he would be glad to have one out for Mr. Squires.

It was on the gravelled drive almost before Squires was resolved, and with the mental comment that this was the first time in years he had taken the easiest way, he dismissed the driver and pointed the car away from Big Savage, along the pike toward town.

The distance was too short. He had no space for thinking. He was turning into Front Street and bringing the car to a noiseless, characteristic stop before the old Vaness home in minutes too few for his deliberate desires.

A slender, brown-eyed child of seven was watering a border of garden flowers. Her morning duty reminded the man in the car that there were occasions for calls,

and he wished he had driven around the town a little. He felt too early. Yet he knew now that he had come all this distance from the West only to see Annice; so he approached the child.

"If Mrs. Vaness is at home will you ask her if she will see an old friend for a moment—Carver Squires?"

With a shy gesture toward the wicker chairs on the deep porch, the child disappeared into the house. Carver did not sit, however, but from the retirement of the Virginia creeper at the end of the porch, he stood and watched the old street dreaming in the morning sunlight. He was conscious in a moment that Annice had appeared and was standing at the other end of the porch, looking at him. It was the moment that, in spite of rigid self-discipline, he knew he had been preparing for for years. He wished to preserve it, shut it off from its millions of preceding moments, and those to come. So he turned slowly and looked long and levelly at the woman he had come to see.

It was all over in a twinkling. He knew instantly the answer to the question he had been carrying with him for ten years. She was happy. She had been right. Her marriage was complete, a success. Jerome Vaness had done what Carver had felt instinctively he would not, could not, do.

"This is splendid, Carver!"

It was a perfectly cordial and conventional greeting, accompanied by the correct pressure of a hand.

"I saw Jerome at the club," Squires explained. "He didn't see me. I stayed the night there, and—well, I hadn't decided not to leave town again immediately, so I didn't hail him."

She looked slightly puzzled, motioned him to a chair, and called the child to her.

"This is our Sarah. Mr. Squires is an old friend of mother's, dear."

Sarah's curtsy was touched with a vague charm which made Squires think of earlier times.

"Then there is Jerome," Annice added. "He is having his bath. Jerome is two."

Sarah went back to her garden. Her mother regarded Squires keenly; yet the man felt that she did not, actually, see him. It was an odd feeling he had frequently with women; but he had never ex-

perienced it with Annice. It irritated him.

“You are, of course, older, Carver; but you are the same person. We would love to have you stay with us. . . .”

He raised a hand.

“I came on an impulse; hardly more than a whim. I shall go away like that. I’m better at the club. I should be rather absurd as a guest.”

She was silent, her eyes on the street and her fingers busy with a leaf she had picked. He had no clue as to whether his visit demanded an explicit allusion, an explanation. He studied her, wanting to be able to remember the moment—Annice sitting there, slight, sensitive, a regal creature. Fastidious—that was the word to use about her. All the Moray women were like that. Annice had more than a kind of searching loveliness; she had, Carver reminded himself, loveliness of spirit.

It was all there. No need for him to ask any leading questions about her life with Vaness. Obviously it had been a success.

Squires felt suddenly old and tired. He reached for his linen cap. He was conscious of a wave of unexpected heat and a slight disgust with himself. To put in ten years building up resistance to a thought and then collapse before it at an odor and the coloring of a hillside made it difficult for him to appraise himself as highly as a man should. He stood, resolutely. If she would give only a hint that she understood why he had come—but she wouldn’t; probably she couldn’t. Women had a kind of obtuseness when they had what they wanted.

“Not going so soon? We’ve not talked. You’ll come to dinner? You’ll see Jerome at the club; he’s there a great deal this summer. The doctor told him to be as much as possible in the fresh air.”

“I don’t know. I may as well admit I don’t know why I came. I have no family, no interests here any more.”

He turned to her sternly, almost, she thought, angrily. He went on:

“It won’t do any harm to tell you, though I didn’t intend to blurt it out like this. I came to see you. I wanted to know how . . .”

He paused and turned away. She helped him, in a calm, precise voice:

“Jerome and I? Ah, Carver, that was it, wasn’t it? Well, it is and has been perfect.”

There was silence for a minute. Then she continued:

“You were mistaken about Jerome, Carver.”

“I am glad I was, Annice.”

To his surprise she laid a slender hand on his.

“Don’t think that I don’t understand, Carver. I didn’t at first; my life is so full and contented. But I see it now. It has been how long?”

“Ten years.”

She broke the mood with a short laugh.

“Well, stay and let us hear something about you.”

He regarded her gravely.

“Jerome is everything to you, isn’t he?”

She closed her eyes.

“Everything. If any of the things you expected had come true I might have gone on, but I would have been broken. There would have been no rest, no peace, for me. But none of them has come true.”

She ended on a bright note.

“I see,” the other commented. “I am—have been—too imaginative. Your happiness meant a great deal to me; and some way, I could not shake off the feeling that I might be wanted, even needed.”

Annice did not answer. She was watching the child busy at the flowers. Squires doubted whether she had really heard him.

“I cannot say when I am leaving,” he said. “For the day, at least, I’m at the club.”

She gave him a hand and in a moment he was starting the car. As the engine responded he glanced back at the porch. It was empty.

Back in his room at Big Savage, Squires sat on the edge of the bed trying to organize his thinking against the insidious invitations of the foot-hills. Finally, with a glance at the time-table and his watch, he began to put his things into his bag. It was not much of a visit home, after ten years, but the feeling that had brought him here was gone. He was not only calm; he was utterly and profoundly de-

tached from the place and all of its associations. He could recognize the allurements of the spot and weigh their effect upon him; but he could put them decisively aside, without regret.

Golf on the new course across the highway interested him not at all; nor a plunge into the new pool he had heard about, waters dammed back for the greens. There might be a chair or two, or perhaps a cherry chest of drawers, in some of the old houses of the town; these he could and should take West. But the response to that possibility was lacking, too. He closed his bag. The trip was over; and it was a failure.

No; that was not exact. It was a success in that he felt no longer that restless desire for place and people, and that desire for Annice, that had stood in the path of his contentment for years. But the change left him cold. He was, at last, without emotion for Big Savage. Admitting his tinge of surliness, he hoped he could get out without meeting Solomon Dyson's boy; he would leave a present for him.

Bag in hand, Squires descended to the lounge, and from the sleek youth in the office demanded his bill. From where he stood at the desk he commanded the entrance to the quiet, cool room characteristically called the grill. It was luncheon time. The clerk, busy searching the record for his guest's score, gave Squires an opportunity of noting the scene.

Vaness was sitting in the dining-room, leaning forward in earnest conversation with somebody Squires could not see. A pillar interfered with the line of vision. On Vaness' face was a peculiar and particular expression, one that Squires knew and could translate. His mind shot back to Annice, standing on the porch——

"If any of the things you expected had come true . . . there would have been no peace."

Squires moved a few inches, clearing his vision of the pillar. He wanted to see the woman who was making Vaness look like that. He photographed her face on his mind, and then gestured to the surprised clerk.

"Never mind that. I've changed my mind. I'm staying."

Very slowly and with head bent in

thought, Squires carried his bag up-stairs again.

As he unpacked he was thinking about that girl. She must be a Shirey; probably one of Cornish Shirey's daughters grown up. That especial combination of brow and bluish-black coloring he had never seen elsewhere. He placed her at about twenty-two or three. Either Cornish Shirey's fortunes had mended, or she was one of those club figures of undetermined family status or obligations, contributing youth and vivacity, paying her way with smiles and dances.

These clubs, Squires decided, probably were making things hard for some of the girls. Before Society moved from town and abandoned its homes it had not been so difficult.

At any rate, he could not go until he found out what Jerome Vaness was up to; and that he was up to something was quite evident. To Carver Squires the inclination of Jerome Vaness away from the normal was a fixed quantity. He was amused to recall that he had permitted Annice to persuade him.

He would have to be around the club a while, perhaps for days. Or he might corner Vaness, say some things to him, and be gone. What he saw was that Annice was wholly deluded and that a crash was imminent. Soon there would be the first night in which she would not sleep.

He went over and stood by the window. What were those lines he had heard Manton read that night, throwing himself for a moment into the character of Iago, in a club of stage people Squires had visited in New York?

The vision conjured by the magic of Manton's voice returned, Iago gloating over the approaching Othello:

" . . . Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou ow'dst yesterday."

"Not poppy." No; nor anything else would restore to Annice her house of dreams. As Squires stood by the window Vaness and the girl appeared below, strolled across the lawn and got into a small car. They did not drive toward town.

On the porch below at the end of the afternoon Squires came across Cardon Jamieson, sitting at a table drinking ginger ale and reading the paper. It was from Cardon that, preliminaries over, he began to draw certain confirmatory statements.

Cardon and he had been boys together. Between them was a kind of understanding which cleared their intercourse of the common baffles. The other, too, was staying at the club. He explained this when he sent Solomon Dyson's boy to his room on an errand, and was able, presently, to fortify the ginger ale.

"He's been slipping for two or three years," he went on, in response to a statement by Squires. "This girl is, as you supposed, a Shirey. The trouble is, she thinks she has a mission to make Jerome happy. If it were not Jerome it would be somebody else. It is being done a great deal lately; almost a new profession. I have an idea it has something to do with the freedom and informality these clubs provide and a general loosening of old screws since the war."

He sipped his drink and let his gaze wander over the hazy landscape.

"Often the wives stay at home . . . too much," he went on. "The men, well—exercise and relaxation are both utterly acceptable explanations these days. Golf is like a husband's business; absolutely sacred. Nothing can interfere with it. It may become a way, an opportunity, for other pursuits."

Squires nodded.

"Annice is deluded, of course."

"I should say that Annice will be the last person to know it or believe it."

"Let me tell you about her," Cardon went on. "She is of a rare and passing kind. Women like Annice give a love and trust that is—well, in some crowds it isn't even good form. It would be laughed at."

"This girl, as I see her," remarked Squires, "is brittle. Her character, if she has any, is shallow."

"Anybody but Jerome Vaness touches bottom at a glance. She's pretty. She is always at her best. Mentally she has nothing on the ball. A good-looking moron; that is Cecelia Shirey."

"She wouldn't fight over Jerome?"

Jamieson finished his drink.

"Don't make me laugh," he said.

"Has anybody tried to do anything with Jerome?"

"Nobody that I know. That's another rule of to-day. Let the other fellow go; no matter where; no matter how. What he does is nobody's business. It is personal liberty."

Squires sat and watched the sun pause for that last, long sinking moment. He raised a hand negatively when Jamieson pushed the bottle across and got up, murmuring something about a walk. He had before him Annice, her children on their way to bed, or waiting dinner in the house on Front Street.

Waiting for Vaness; the idea was, in a way, laughable. He felt rising within him, however, the presentiment of a strange rage, an emotion he had not realized for years. Across the road by the first tee he stood and watched the fairways beginning to fade. Unconsciously he took the path toward the hill which overlooked the artificial lake. At the top, on a bench under a little elm, he considered Annice. It was, in a very real way, not his business; and yet he had within his command the question of her peace.

"Not poppy . . ." The lines came back to him.

There was another possibility. Let Jerome ride to his fall; Annice might recover. She might even consider him. Squires smiled to himself. Preposterous; he put it away. Women who cared like Annice for Jerome cared only once. That made it all the more devilish.

When he strolled back to the clubhouse there was music in the wide principal room. It was the thrumming of banjos and the unique sounds made by negroes when they play violins and pianos by ear. The last time he had heard that indefinable quality they had played a waltz—the staircase music from "The Count of Luxembourg"—at least twelve years ago.

He was so startled by the man who brushed past him in the darkness that he saw, almost too late, it was Vaness.

"Jerome," he called, sharply.

The other turned and waited until Squires came up.

"You remember me, of course; Carver Squires."

"Oh, yes; glad to see you again,

Squires." Vaness, Squires saw, still paraded that stilted, patronizing manner he was apt to use when he had had a little alcohol.

"Sorry I can't stop. Must be running on. I'm a little late for dinner now. An-nice—Mrs. Vaness, you know—'phoned. We have guests. I forgot all about it. Good joke on me."

Carver regarded the other gravely.

"You can't go now, can you? It's late; and you are a little the worse for wear."

"Only a little. The air'll fix me up. I've been worse than this. They won't pay any attention, anyway; the old town has changed since you lived here, Carver."

He was gone. Squires watched him drive out. Vaness was right. The old town had changed.

He decided to be off next day. He would find Jerome and corner him, breaking through his barrier of assurance and talking levelly in language no one could misunderstand. Vaness was not worth it; either time or effort. His only possible gain would be the knowledge that it would never be necessary to come back.

The hired car, in which Squires chose to rove tranquilly over the foot-hills before he left, took him with less urging than he had feared to the three or four spots he wished to visit alone. He was surprised and gratified to find his watch reading eight when he came to the foot of the long grade of a back road, little used, leading to the club. He might, he saw, make the night train without hurrying.

On his right was a sheer drop into deceptive tree-tops, already dark. Ahead loomed the first mountain on the old trail, which was now a marvel of macadam, described perfectly by a white safety railing. It was a place for slow, comfortable, meditative driving, and hideously inappropriate, Squires thought, for a fellow like the one who had just entered the Double S turn ahead, and was approaching, full tilt.

The lights of the descending car slanted fitfully, without purpose; the driver was running many times too fast. Of course, Providence would guide him past all perils. The approaching machine disappeared on one of the long turns, and Squires sat back relieved. If he met no more like that he could carry away with

him a satisfying memory of the mountain, at least.

He was, therefore, instantly in a rage when the other car, shooting down and around the last turn, on the wrong side of the road, was practically upon him. It was the most devilish piece of driving he had ever seen.

Automatically Squires swerved his machine, missing the collision by an unaccountable margin. The wild driver kept on his way, and Carver, sitting tense where he had stopped, strained his ears hoping that he would not hear the guard railing snap. But he did.

He marked one scream of terror, then the descent into the tree-tops, and finally the sickening crunch and shattering of glass, preceding eloquent silence.

Carver knew he was ridiculously slow in parking at the break in the rail and picking his way down the side of the ravine. He was seized with a desire to be deliberate and methodical. Whoever the victims were, they were past help. It would be a nasty job of lifting.

He struck a match and, stooping among the brambles, turned the first one over. The match burned itself out in his fingers as he peered down at the smeared face. He did not light another at once but drew away, brushing his hands together, an involuntary gesture. He knew without looking who the other victim was. The woman he had just turned over was Cecelia Shirey.

He leaned against a sumach, seeing An-nice standing on the porch there on Front Street. To-morrow the whole town would have this story. Vaness, like his kind, had overplayed his hand.

Squires went over and dragged Vaness out of the coupé, stretching him among the raspberry bushes. He spoiled his suit with an incredible quantity of blood in doing so, and he let Vaness settle back against the turf with a definite feeling of disgust.

The trouble was that Vaness, like the girl, was alive. To Squires the thing would have been much simpler had it been otherwise. But they were not only alive; they were not even greatly hurt, and both were, almost immediately, perversely angry. The Shirey girl sat up and began to cry.



From a drawing by Eugene C. Cassidy.

"If you'd done as I said . . . now what are we going to do?"—Page 550.

"I told you to go on home to that dinner. If you'd done as I said . . . now what are we going to do? Damn it! My dress is ruined."

Over by Vaness Squires struck another match.

"It's you, is it?" asked the injured man. "I see we're not killed. Can't you get us out of this and help me get cleaned up?"

"It won't help to get cleaned up. That cut across your forehead and the one down Miss Shirey's cheek will tell the tale. No; you're not killed, if that's any comfort to you. There is plenty of blood; but neither one of you is hurt—enough."

Vaness struggled to one knee. "There is a flashlight in the pocket of my car," he said.

"I'll take it and see if I can get Miss Shirey up the hill to my car. Then I'll come down and help you. You'd better be thinking how you are going to explain this episode to Annice. Perhaps Miss Shirey will go along and help explain it."

"No!" she almost screamed. "Take me away; get me out of this. You know what everybody's going to say now. After a wreck like this, they'll say we . . ."

"Well," Squires stopped her, "you were, weren't you?"

"I'm going up and stop a car and get out of this."

Squires stooped and seized one of her wrists, drawing her to her feet. Still holding the wrist, he said, quietly:

"You'll do nothing but what I say. You've made enough trouble as it is. The principal thing is to get out of this gulley without making a disturbance."

She subsided into weeping, groping for a smashed vanity-box, wiping away blood and dust with the hem of her dress.

"You understand, Jerome," Carver said, turning to the man, "that this wreck gives everything away to Annice. There is no evasion now. The game is up."

"That's the hell of it. It's coming to me, all right."

Squires seized the opening.

"But not coming to Annice, is it? You see that; even you. She has a right to peace and happiness, even if that happiness rests in you. Now you've smashed it. You are the incompetent trustee of

her contentment; as a lawyer you get the point."

"We might as well go and get it over," said Vaness, dully.

Cecelia was weeping on the other side of the wreck.

"Can't you shut her up, Squires?" The other spoke sharply. "She makes me furious."

Squires laughed.

"That's splendid. I hope she makes you so damned furious you'll never look at anybody like her again."

Vaness stood. "I'm going home; I'm going to tell Annice the whole story. It's the only way."

Squires pondered there in the dark, thinking about Annice. What Jerome was about to do would be all right with some women, but not with Annice. Jerome didn't comprehend, of course; and there was no use trying to explain to him.

"No," he said at last. "That is not the way. You do not understand your wife; you never will, for that matter. But the essential thing is to keep the knowledge of this smash away from her; and for you to go straight."

He looked up the bank, his eyes resting on the lamps of his hired car. Then he looked at Jerome, a long moment.

"I have it. You and the girl stand back, out of danger. I have a thought," he said slowly.

At the top of the high, steep bank Squires started the engine of his car, then got out and reaching to the wheel guided it to the very edge of the chasm. Standing aside, he watched it hang for an instant on the edge, and then turn completely over and plunge into the darkness.

Immediately he slid and skidded down the bank again, purposely snagging his clothes on the stones and thorns. Below, with a few gestures, he marked himself thoroughly with blood and dirt.

To Vaness, surprised and doubtful, he said:

"You see the idea. I was driving down the mountain with the Shirey girl. You were coming up alone, hurrying home to your dinner engagement. I pushed you over against the rail, drove you off the road. You tried to avoid me; but here we all are. I'll go along and explain. But"—Squires lowered his voice

—“I have my reasons. I’ll do this, not for you but for Annice. You’re no good; I’ve always known that. You are certain you understand?”

Jerome nodded, dumbly.

To the driver of the car he stopped, after a painful climb back to the road, Squires told the story, simply and carefully, turning from time to time to Vaness, crumpled in the back seat, and to the girl beside him, so they would remember it.

Cornish Shirey, now an old man Squires saw, sat on the front step of his old frame house, smoking a pipe in the darkness.

“She’s not hurt; only bruised and scared,” Squires explained to him. “I was driving her in from the club and we had a collision; rolled down a bank. This will take care of the damage.”

He put a bill into the old man’s hand, and followed the girl into the dark hall.

“Remember, no matter what is said, you were driving with me,” he said. She gave him a frightened look, murmured something, and was gone.

At the Vaness home he pressed Jerome back into the car and hurried ahead of him up the walk to the porch, where, a moment later, Annice appeared, a tell-tale hand on her breast, revealing her anxiety and fright.

“Carver! You are covered with blood!”

She caught the edge of the doorway, pressing the back of her other hand against her mouth, her eyes full of trouble.

“You’ve come to tell me about Jerome. He’s hurt. Tell me quickly, Carver, that he is only hurt!”

“Yes; only hurt. And not greatly hurt, Annice,” he said gently, steadying her with a hand. “He’s coming now.”

The sight of Jerome walking unassisted changed Annice instantly. She laughed in her relief; but she clenched her hands, listening to Squires with an effort.

“It was my fault,” he said. “I was driving on the mountain with a girl—Cecelia Shirey—and . . .”

“You?” She turned toward him unbelievably. “You with her, Carver?”

Jerome was at the foot of the steps, looking up at his wife.

“Yes; it was she, Annice.” Squires insisted now on Annice’s full attention. “Jerome was coming the other way, hurrying home to a dinner engagement, I guess. I pushed him off the road, and we all, both cars, went into the gulley. Jerome did his best to avoid us.”

Squires looked steadily at Annice.

“Jerome, in fact, chose to go over, hoping to spare us.”

At that Annice gave him an amazing look of reproach and rushed down to her husband, putting ineffectual arms around him, spoiling her white gown with blood and dust.

As they reached the top of the steps Jerome put out a hand and touched Squires, standing against a pillar. “Carver was not to blame, Annice,” he said.

“No; I suppose not,” she replied coldly.

The two passed into the house. The screen-door banged. Squires waited a moment, and then made his way slowly to the street.

In his room at Big Savage he wrote a check and handed it to Solomon Dyson’s son, who was packing for him.

“That car I had to-night,” he said, “you will find in the ravine beside the Double S turn on the back road. I was driving with a young lady. We had a smash, and both cars went through the railing. To-morrow give this to the garage man for the car.”

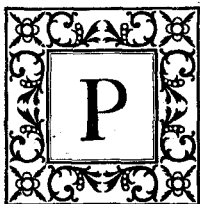
For some minutes Squires stood at the window that overlooked the golf course. Strangely, he was contented. He had acquired, at last, command. Turning, he called the colored boy to him and smiled as he counted out a present.

“Get somebody to run me into town for the midnight train,” he said. “And remember, if anybody asks you about the wreck to-night, the lady was with me.”



Quenching America's Mental Thirst

BY GREGORY MASON



PROBABLY the most picturesque development among the many agencies which cater to the hunger in this country for mental pabulum is the growth of the popular lecture.

The institution known as the lyceum has been with us for ninety-seven years, but it has recently had a remarkable expansion. Moreover, the popular lecture has lately been marked by the same change that is conspicuous in journalism and literature; that is, an increased seriousness of tone, occasioned by the nascent American thirst for substantial information. Look at the vogue in this country of serious books like "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," "The Outline of History," "The Story of Mankind," and "The Outline of Science." Even among novels the present fashion is for the kind the plain American calls "serious"; *i. e.*, novels believed to deal with existing conditions and believed to impart more or less definite information.

Consider the titles of some characteristic lectures delivered at the 1922 convention of the International Lyceum and Chautauqua Association. (These lectures are typical of what America is getting because the chief lure which impels speakers to compete for a place on the convention's programme is the hope of "selling" their lectures to some of the many representatives of booking agencies in attendance. Only experienced and well-known speakers are given a hearing.) The first three lectures on the last programme were: "With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia," by Dr. Frederick Poole, "The Next War," by Will Irwin, and "The Truth About Mexico," by Dr. Frederick Monsen.

It is no longer necessary to punctuate a serious lecture with cheap jokes—which to the intelligent listener was as if the speaker said: "You see, I don't really mean what I'm saying after all."

What are the facts about this new American passion for listening to lectures? What is this lyceum movement to which one hears and reads so many allusions? Where does it flourish, how is it organized, what sort of men and women take part in it, as speakers and as auditors?

To a good many travellers who follow only the beaten paths in the United States the term lyceum is perhaps nearly meaningless. Speaking in general, the lyceum does not flourish along the beaten paths or in the polished centres of population. Of course, the large city has its lectures. But there are lectures and lectures. The occasional declamations of our *literati* are not the real thing. The amiable garrulities of European celebrities who condescend to exhibit themselves on the platforms of our larger cities are not the real thing. Indeed, this matter is much misunderstood among inhabitants of our larger cities. Only recently two of our widely known literary men have in print referred to a lecturer as a being who talks from "notes." Unthinkable of unthinkable! Your real professional lecturer never uses notes. For him to produce one small sheet of notes from his inside coat pocket would mean the loss of the attention of two-thirds of his audience and the loss of the attendance of the other third.

In short, the native or foreign author, statesman, or jurist who pads his income with occasional journeys to our oratorical platforms is not the real professional lecturer. He (or she) often gets the best of our audiences and usually gets the best of our fees, but he (or she) is, after all, only a dabbler in the elocutionary art. A large percentage of such persons are distinguished foreign visitors, and this type of migratory orator is usually booked and managed by an organization such as the Keedick Bureau or the Pond Bureau. Such bureaus are confined mainly to a few large cities on our Atlantic coast. They book their lecturers by mail. As