

ple it wishes to help to help themselves, and, in turn, to aid others. While social settlements as a whole are supposed to stand for democracy in their various relationships, there is probably none which has worked out this principle so definitely and practically as Hudson Guild. And

it is in working with such leaders in the life of America and helping make known the work that is being done by these welfare, civic, and educational agencies that one feels that one's own work is richly rewarded and distinctly worth while.

These paragraphs by no means tell the whole story of ten years of publicity effort, but merely cite typical organizations for whose work there has been a crying need, and whose own work and needs I have had the privilege of presenting to the American public.

Next week Charles Stelzle gives his impressions of some of America's "big men."

The Book Table

Edited by EDMUND PEARSON

Is It a Literary Sin to Please Readers?

By R. D. TOWNSEND

MR. LEWIS has a keen eye for the disagreeable side of poor humanity. One feels that he dislikes most kinds of people very much, or else that he vigilantly abstains from talking about those he does like. His "Mantrap"¹ is a minor piece of fiction as compared with "Arrowsmith," and that not merely in length but in the cross-section of American life exposed. Still, within its limitations, it is as disagreeable as possible.

Every one knows what happens when two men opposite in temperament, taste, and social position are thrown for a long time into close contact. Here we have a cultured, nervous, high-strung young lawyer and a brutal, foul-mouthed braggart, "a round, thick, self-satisfied man," off together on a fishing and canoe trip in Canada. To say that they quarrel is to put it mildly. They hate one another, and the reader hates them both. Rescued from his torture by Joe, an honest trader, Ralph, the young lawyer, for a time is free from storm and stress. But Joe has been ill-advised enough to marry Alverna, a lovely manicurist, and she proceeds to lead Joe, Ralph, and several other men a lively dance. The energies of the trading post are largely centered in finding out who can jazz the best, drink the hardest, and hold the affections of the erstwhile manicurist the longest. The author tells us that in Ralph's eyes Alverna was also Helen and Iseult and Héloïse; but we doubt it. In the end Joe and Ralph, equally disillusioned, succeed in shipping the excitable Helen of this repulsive Troy off to her native Minneapolis. Joe is the only character in the book for whom one feels any liking, the only one who is unselfish and generous of heart, and Joe is rather victim than hero.

"Mantrap" is offered to readers as

¹ Mantrap. By Sinclair Lewis. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York. \$2.

"romantic and thrilling"—ignoble and distressing are more exactly descriptive words.

If it is a blemish for a novelist to have a sympathetic rather than a contemptuous attitude toward human frailty and to look at life tolerantly rather than sourly, Miss Ertz in her successful "Madam Claire" and now in her cheerful story "After Noon"² has offended. But much may be forgiven even by those who cry aloud "Victorian" to an author who gives us so enjoyable a character as Charles in "After Noon." Deserted by a rich wife and left in the ridiculous yet tragic situation of being both father and mother to twin girl babies, Charles proves a philosopher. He "carries on," looks smilingly if not trustingly at life, becomes a convinced but not cynical misogynist, sees his twins grow up and leave him, and, as is foreseen by all, eventually marries a charming and cultivated lady, only to meet another conjugal problem because his wife misunderstands his acquired habit of speaking in a humorously scoffing way of marriage and womankind and doubts his love. The author gets him out of this mess as deftly as she got him into it, and the book ends in a happy vein.

Simple? Yes. Silly? No. Enjoyable? Decidedly.

A "hill-billy" in Southern parlance is a mountain-bred chap as he is looked at by the semi-sophisticated. Miss Lane's particular "Hill-Billy"³ derived from sturdy English ancestors who trekked Westward, stopping a generation or so in Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and finally reached the Ozarks in Missouri. Abimelech Baird's resemblance in certain ways to Abraham Lincoln is evident,

² After Noon. By Susan Ertz. D. Appleton & Co., New York. \$2.

³ Hill-Billy. By Rose Wilder Lane. Harper & Brothers, New York. \$2.

but this is not an attempt to portray Lincoln. Both men were self-taught, used dialect and told apt stories when they felt like it, were clever in getting their clients acquitted, and grew up to be respected and useful men. Abimelech was shrewd and tricky where Abraham was shrewd and wise.

There is plenty of action in the incidents of "Hill-Billy," a stormy and honor-testing love complication, a fine account of Abimelech's pride in his old hill life and his hard-toiling father and mother, a pleasing rendering of the drawling humor of the hill people, and a dialect so euphonious and infectious that, without ever hearing it actually spoken, one feels that it must be true and exact.

Thus two of these three novels give pleasure and satisfaction to the reader, whereas the first shows, painfully and conscientiously, disagreeable aspects of life as if they only were worthy of attention.

Other Fiction

TRIUMPH. By Leonie Aminoff. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. \$2.

We haven't read the five previous Napoleonic romances in this series. This one reads as if it were written by Mrs. George Babbitt. It chatters and gurgles and tells how Josephine regretted her dear little house and found the palace chilly, and it is funny and smart in the wrong places. We would much sooner re-read Miss Mühlbach's "Marie Louise."

THE ENEMY'S GATES. By Brooks Barrett. Boni & Liveright, New York. \$2.

There are gates that can never be crashed and barriers difficult to burn away. "The Enemy's Gates" presents forcefully the problem of intermarriage between four people racially and characteristically far apart. The two gallant attempts end tragically in a thorough case of racial indigestion for all the parties concerned. Mark Morgenthal, typical successful business man, and his wife Rachel, jealous of her tribal integrity, are descendants of the old Jewish aristocracy. In dying, Rachel bequeaths her bitterness against a promiscuous husband to her son George. Already a morbid, hypersensitive boy, he is "doomed to play a losing game," and his marriage with Ann Carter, the daughter of an old New York family, is a pitiful story of the slow failure of a great love. Jessica, the second child, is a robust character, with the voluptuous coloring of ancient Judea.

In her magnificent fashion she marries Geoffrey Clarke, a cold New England Puritan, and, finding him unworthy, turns to Phillip Heilmann, one of her own people. Morton Morgenthal, the other son, is a repellent egotist and airy sophist whose chief pleasure lies in baiting the unhappy George. "The Enemy's Gates" is not a pleasant book, but it is a veracious picture of an important element in American society.

VAINGLORY. By Ronald Firbank. Brentano's, New York. \$2.

This, says the author, is the smartest of his works. That is a fair warning and relieves us of the necessity of reading the others. As a matter of fact, we have tried two others and remain unimpressed by this author, although he is praised to the tip-top skies by a little band of acolytes.

BANZAI. By John Paris. Boni & Liveright, New York. \$2.50.

Supposed to be an autobiographical novel by a modern Japanese, but actually by an Occidental who knows Japan fairly well. It may be suspected that as a representation of the Japanese mind it would impress the Japanese in about the same way that a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" would impress him as a picture of Japanese Court life.

A GENTEEL LADY. By Esther Forbes. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. \$2.

If we mistake not, some real people in decorous disguise walk sedately before the eyes of this "genteel lady." If they are really types, some of them are mightily alive types. The author has a sound sense of humor and knows the traditions of the Boston of a generation ago, and especially those of publishers and authors. We even get a glimpse of Oliver Wendell Holmes in person, and the Genteel Lady knew Tennyson and the Brownings. A thoroughly enjoyable book, not dependent on the ordinary rules of novel construction.

IT'S NOT DONE. By William C. Bullitt. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York. \$2.

If this is Mr. Bullitt's first novel, it is no mean attempt. He possesses the capacity to create suspense and to arouse a sincere interest in his characters. His hero, the weak but lovable John Corsey, is the son of genuine American aristocracy as it existed forty-five years ago in the limited but exquisite city of Chesterbridge, which the reader will have no difficulty in identifying. John runs true to form and deserts Nina Michaud, the sculptor's daughter, who lives on the wrong side of the Square, for the suitable Mildred Ashley, with whom he is singularly unhappy. Sex in the raw heavily besprinkles the book. The author appears to have an inordinate obsession upon the subject; his people have more body than soul. What is lacking? The element of beauty, that, like a rare moth, has folded her wings and departed from the majority of to-day's novels, yet is present in "The Forsyte Saga," a story of a family as realistic as this one, and with equally sordid elements.

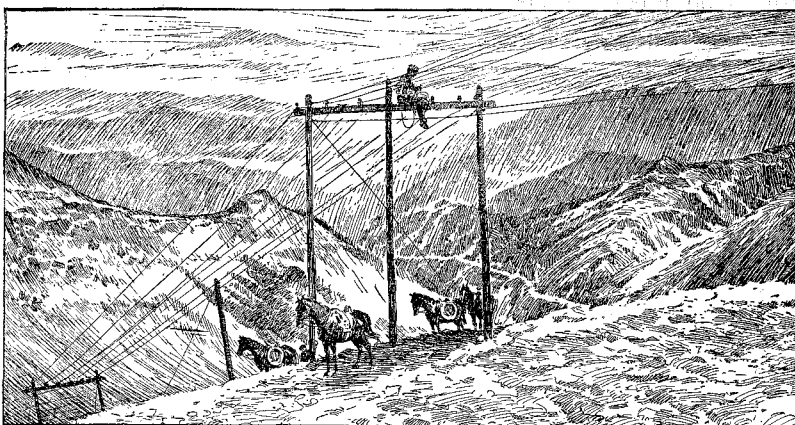
Well, we can pay the price of admission to Mr. Bullitt's mind: we shall remember the Square in the snow!

Biography

A BEAUTIFUL BLUNDER. By William E. Barton. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis.

Some of the finest things are done as the result of mistake. This is true in literature as well as in the world of action. It is now said that the Rev. Mr. Hyde, who was so beautifully flayed by Robert Louis Stevenson in the letter about Father Damien, did not really deserve it, after all. That does not lessen the force of Stevenson's invective. And Dr. Barton now shows that the Mrs. Bixby, of Boston, the recipient of Abraham Lincoln's superb letter of consolation, had not really

Telephone line over the Rocky Mountains



The Builders of the Telephone

SPANNING the country, under rivers, across prairies and over mountain ranges, the telephone builders have carried the electric wires of their communication network. Half a century ago the nation's telephone plant was a few hundred feet of wire and two crude instruments. The only builder was Thomas A. Watson, Dr. Bell's assistant.

It was a small beginning, but the work then started will never cease. In 50 years many million miles of wire have been strung, many million telephones have

been installed, and all over the country are buildings with switchboards and the complicated apparatus for connecting each telephone with any other. The telephone's builders have been many and their lives have been rich in romantic adventure and unselfish devotion to the service.

Telephone builders are still extending and rebuilding the telephone plant. A million dollars a day are being expended in the Bell System in construction work to provide for the nation's growing needs.

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