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The Book Table

Edited by EDMUND PEARSON

Fiction

CLOUD CUCKOO LAND. By Naomi Mitchison. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York. \$2.50.

When the power of Athens was failing and Sparta was still fresh, austere, and valiant and when Cyrus the Persian was planning his famous march to the sea, men and women loved and suffered and children played and were charming even as to-day. "An historical novel about Greece and the islands of the seas, about 600 B.C."—that sounds scholarly and serious. Mrs. Mitchison has made her characters glow with life and move naturally in the places and time in which they are put. The personal, in short, holds its own well as compared with the historical and classical. There is fighting on land and sea, political revolution, the drinking of hemlock by fallen rulers, and a vivid picture of the strife between democracy and oligarchy and the shifting leagues and counter-plots between the great and little Greek states. But this book is not Greek history nor Greek literature; it is the life of certain Greeks as it went on in war time and in peace. It does not require scholarship to enjoy this book, only a sense of the drama of human aspiration, sorrow and despair, or triumph.

UP HILL, DOWN DALE. By Eden Phillpotts. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$2.

As full of rich country flavor as the clotted cream of his own beloved Devonshire, where the scene of all of them is laid, these sixteen short stories by Mr. Eden Phillpotts are inferior to his novels in length but not in quality. They are widely various in subject, ranging from the tragic, the thrilling, and the gruesome to broad rustic comedy. Every one of them is good, but our personal preference is for a delicious tale of a lone old "widow-man" and his brindled cat. Good cat stories are as rare as good dog stories are many, which is fair neither to the excellent literary possibilities of puss nor the natural cravings of cat lovers. This story of Peter Blount, Sunny Jim, his pet, and the vet., who is the comic villain of the piece, is a gem.

JERICHO SANDS. By Mary Borden. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. \$2.50.

"Jericho Sands" is the story of a romantic love that moves relentlessly to a bitter end. The lovely young Priscilla Brampton marries Simon Birch, rector of Creech St. Michaels and Lord of the Manor, "because he was good, and she was fond of him." As might be expected, she later meets and falls in love with

Crab Willing, only son and heir of Tupper, fifteenth Marquis of Moone. These two fly straight in the face of convention, and because of their love "succeed in doing themselves and every one concerned an immense amount of harm." Simon is "a clergyman of the intenser mold." Madly in love with his wife and unable to reconcile this passion with his mystic love for his God, he suffers from repressed desires and an insane jealousy, which makes his subsequent actions more explicable in the name of Freud than in the name of religion. Not a pleasant book, but one with a deep and passionate sincerity. Miss Borden has analyzed her characters so minutely as sometimes to be painful, and bared their emotions beyond a point which we have been taught to believe British.

FERNANDE. By W. B. Maxwell. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York. \$2.

It is fairly certain that "Fernande" will stand second in the list of Mr. Maxwell's novels only to his "Spinster of this Parish," and there are very, very few recent novels of English life that compare with it in the art of developing the characters and making them work out their ruin or their social solidity as their natures impel them. The old truth that few men and women are all bad or all good is thoroughly illustrated. Fernande has been pushed by an abominable mother, a drunken husband, and an irresponsible nominal husband into desperate straits; her career is deplorable; yet the reader sees plainly that there is something true-hearted about her and pities rather than despises her. There are several carefully drawn fiction portraits in the novel and its interest is continually sustained by incident and dialogue. Some readers will find things to cavil at as too frank, but the intention is certainly not injurious or vulgar.

Essays and Criticism

PETER PANTHEISM. By Robert Haven Schauflier. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$2.

Mr. Schauflier is not old, nor stodgy, nor mincingly literary, but he is refreshingly free from the smart-Aleck commonness of the familiar prose of to-day. Now and then in his latest volume, "Peter Pantheism," he seems to be trying to write down to his audience a bit. Here and there, especially in two papers of juvenile reminiscence, "Cupid in Kilts," and "Cupid in Knickerbockers," he totters on the dreadful verge of sprightliness. At his best, he has the

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same kind of charm (we say kind, not degree) that belong to Elia, and the Autocrat, and Miss Repplier, and Dr. Crothers—and to Christopher Morley & Co. at *their* best. In the right mood, and at the right time, he entertains us with the warmth and grace of that fabled creature, the gentleman-and-scholar. The first essay in "Peter Pantheism" is a jewel of price—a little masterpiece of the ingenious amenity and well-tempered humor, the unlabored, ruminating, yet mellow and rounded discourse, which we lovingly expect of that not yet obsolete form of expression, the familiar essay.

THE ENGLISH COMIC CHARACTERS. By J. B. Priestley. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York. \$2.50.

Mr. Priestley's matter is familiar. He writes of Falstaff, Touchstone, the brothers Shandy, the two Wellers, Mr. Collins, Dick Swiveller, and Mr. Micawber. One might resuscitate the old pun and say that his manner is also familiar. It is certainly sprightly and confidential. In short, he has done a book of popular character which is more than a little disappointing when considered in the light of two of his previous books, "I For One" and "Figures in Modern Literature." Of the essays here, that on Prince Seithenyn, from Peacock's "Misfortunes of Elphin," is the most in his old vein. We venture the hope that Mr. Priestley will use this essay as the starting-point of a new book on English comic characters, these to include (we suggest) Christopher Vance, Charles and Lupin Pooter, Mr. Polly, Miss Wilberforce, and the Duke of Dorset.

History

FORTY YEARS ON THE FRONTIER. As Seen in the Journals and Reminiscences of Granville Stuart. Edited by Paul C. Phillips. Illustrated. 2 vols. The Arthur H. Clark Company, Cleveland. \$12.50.

Granville Stuart was eighteen years old when in 1852, in the company of his father, his brother James, and a friend, he took the overland journey from Iowa to California. In the winter of 1857-8 he drifted into Montana, and there, until his death in 1918, he remained. He was probably (the matter is still disputed) the first white man to discover gold in that State; he was one of the pioneers in its cattle industry, and in all the development of that region he was one of the most active and influential agents. Through most of those years he kept a diary, much of which he subsequently rewrote. He was studious and thoughtful, a close and accurate observer, and a careful writer. He could draw, too, and some of his sketches are excellent. The period treated in this



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