'Elsket,' which you have signalized with the stamp of your imprimatur, I also think among the very best stories I have written. The first two of these appeal to me almost as much as the dialect stories. The first of these was written on precisely the same theme with 'Marse Chan' and out of the consciousness that whereas the tragedy of 'Marse Chan' was laid in the highest social rank, the incident which had given rise to it was based on a letter written by a poor girl, of much lower rank, to her lover, who like 'Marse Chan' had found his death on the battlefield, and I felt somehow that it was due to that class that I should testify with whatever power I might possess, to their devotion to the South. If there is a difference it seems to me that it lies rather in the fact that readers estimate as more romantic a tragedy in the upper ranks of life than in the lower, whereas, we know that rank has nothing to do with it."

In the very denial of the last sentence, the consciousness of caste rings through. When Hopkinson Smith describes Colonel Carter of Cartersville, he puts the case even more clearly, for he had a broader vision:

"What a frank, generous, tender hearted fellow he is; happy as a boy; hospitable to the verge of beggary; enthusiastic as he is visionary; simple as he is genuine; a Virginian of good birth, fair education, and limited knowledge of the world and of men, proud of his ancestry, proud of his state; and proud of himself; believing in States' Rights, slavery, and the Confederacy, and away down in the bottom of his soul still clinging to the belief that poor white trash of the earth includes about everybody outside of Fairfax County."

One of the most embarrassing moments of my life presented itself through a question put to me by Hopkinson Smith. "You read a lot of these American writers, don't you?" he inquired. "Yes," I replied, "it is my business." "Well," he continued, "perhaps you can tell me something, then. How much of my stuff is going to last?" How I answered him, I cannot remember. I hope I was sincere. Just what is to remain among the work of these five writers as a permanent contribution to our literature in the placid days after "Main Street" and "The Triumph of the Egg" are forgotten? I am most sure of the early work of all of them. With Cable it is "Old Creole Days," "Madam Delphine" and "The Grandissimes." With Page it is "In Ole Virginia" and "The Old Gentleman of the Black Stock." With Smith, it is "Colonel Carter" and "The Romance of an Old Fashioned Gentleman." With Allen it is "The Kentucky Cardinal," "Aftermath," and "The Choir Invisible." With Harris it is, of course, the Uncle Remus stories and "Free Joe." To be sure, much of their later work has its own special merit, like "Red Rock," "Bonaventure," or "The Tides of Barnegat," but each had, like many another writer, his great moment and like many others he went on writing while the clock still ticked, but did not always strike the hour. It will be noticed that many of these early works are short stories and perhaps therein lies one reason for their superiority, for the art of all but Allen gained by the limitations of unity and compression. Smith learned these qualities, as he indicated more than once, from Bret Harte, and the rest may have studied from that model also. When we notice how the short story of "The Island of the Holy Cross," a powerful tale of the slave insurrection in the Danish West Indies, rises out of the confused mass of "The Flower of the Chapdelaines" we realize that Cable's art is best reflected in the shorter form.

But even when the less permanent elements of their work are cleared away, what a residue remains! Cable told me that when he was a clerk in a cotton warehouse, he was a member of a group of young men who wrote stories and criticized each others' work. One of them went to California and on his return told Cable that he should go there at once for that was the land of romance. But Cable replied that while his friend was away, he had discovered in New Orleans a vein of romance which lay at his hand but which all had neglected, the Creole race. In the group of stories that make up "Old Creole Days," he painted a picturesque people, proud of its descent from the earliest French and Spanish settlers, and inheriting their adventurous spirit, dreading the contamination of mixed blood, with life cheap but honor dear. Skilfully he drew a contrast between a few strong characters ruling a large unthrifty population, enjoying freedom from responsibility as their greatest blessing,—a race living contentedly an unsanitary life—with a shadow of dread in the yellow fever always over them—a loyal, tender, revengeful, unreliable race, in short, a Latin race with its energy toned down by climate and years of irresponsible power over a subject people.

The very architecture of the place is romantic,—the houses with their shades of color, the irregular streets, narrow and winding, the balconies with their suggestions of mystery behind them, the courtyards, cool and quiet spots of retreat from the glare. Against this background of an old world civilization in a new world Cable drew some imperishable figures. For reserved tragic strength, for dramatic intensity, the scene in which Madame Delphine, the quadroon, denies her own flesh and blood in order that her daughter may marry the man she loves, is matched in our literature only by the later episode which brings her tortured soul to the confessional of Père Jerome, whence it passes from the comfort of revelation to her earthly friend and pastor to the peace of God. There is no argument against slavery, its terrible effects are drawn by a hand far above the sentimental ecstasies of Uncle Tom, but Cable used the motive as he used it later in the magnificent figure of the African King, Bras Coupé, in "The Grandissimes," simply for the establishment of character.

Page seems not to have realized that the appeal of his short stories lay chiefly in their artistic handling of the theme of loyalty. Whether it was the fidelity of a slave to his master, as in "Marse Chan," a fidelity against which the gates of death closed in vain, or the fortitude of "Little Darby," who saves the confederate army by apparently becoming a traitor, or the constancy of Elsket, the Norse woman, to her lover, it was the instinctive reaction of a reader to the old theme of human fidelity that carried the stories into their deserved success. In "Red Rock" Page painted the South in the days of reconstruction, when a brave people who asked only to be let alone with their great problem were driven to desperation by politicians like Jonadab Leech. In another portion of the letter quoted above, Page says, "After I had written a third or more of the novel I discovered that I had drifted into the production of a political tract and, discarding what I had written, and going back beyond the war, in order to secure a point of departure which would enable me to take a more serene path, I rewrote it entirely. I had discovered that the real facts in the reconstruction period were so terrible that I was unable to describe them fully without subjecting myself to the charge of gross exaggeration." His picture of reconstruction days is much more vivid than that which Cable gives us in "John Marsh, Southerner," or Harris in "Gabriel Tolliver."

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Smith was the most uneven of the group. He worked on a broader canvas and in his pictures of life, here or abroad, he carried the enthusiastic description of the picturesque beyond that of any of his contemporaries. At times his plots are formless and his heroines are pretty much all alike. "Kennedy Square," which Smith thought to be his best novel, but which is not, is a charming study of a portion of a Southern city, laid in Baltimore but really drawn from a square which Smith had seen in Savannah. It is just because Smith the painter was so much interested in his background, that he sometimes neglected to construct a plot. But at times he is unrivalled in his creation of Southern characters—Colonel Carter, Aunt Nancy, Chad, Bud Tilden, remain vivid in the memory. And Smith limited himself less to Southern life than any of the rest. "The Tides of Barnegat," laid in New Jersey amid a civilization, prosperous seventy years ago but now fallen into decay, is the best constructed of his novels and the final scene in which father and son are thrown out of the sea, locked in the grip of death, rises to a high level of dramatic intensity. Tom Grogan, his story of an Irishwoman who takes her husband's place as a subcontractor, is as vivid as any character portrayal of the Southern types.

Harris, too, knew how to contrast Northern and Southern characters and he rivalled Page in the portrayal of the conflict between the sections in the Civil War. "On the Wings of Occasion," his volume of stories which deal with the Confederate Secret Service, is not read nearly as often as it should be, for it contains a picture of Lincoln from the Southern point of view which is original and striking. But Harris, because of his profound significance, is a writer who belongs not alone to the South, but to the English speaking race, and the limits of this survey forbid any real analysis of his most important work.

In a sense, too, Allen is of and yet not of the group. His art, in some respects of a rarer quality, was guided in its development by a theory which would require for its interpretation a separate and very specific treatment. Like the others he selected his material at the beginning from the point of view of romance, but there he parted from them. Cable and Page and Smith one can compare and contrast for they belong to the same company. They, too, selected their material from the romantic point of view, but while Cable treated that material with a realism which holds the romance in check, Page and Smith proceeded, with the treatment of the idealist, to heighten and touch up characters and scenes until they become types rather than individuals. The latter is, of course, the usual method, but while the colors are more vivid, it results in less faithful drawing and in less enduring portraits. That is why Madame Delphine rises above even Colonel Carter and Meh Lady.

It was a brave world these men painted for us, shot through with loyalty and patriotism, with sacrifice for the sake of honor, with a pride of race that passed from memory to memory. When this life faded out of America it left a void that has not been filled, but the Providence that watches over a people's literature decreed that before it disappeared it should be interpreted by those who wrought with skill and with sincerity. Perhaps when we are no longer interested in prying into the purlieus of our national byways we shall return for comfort to this record of a noble dream.

A New Elia

CHARLES LAMB: A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS. By ALICE BROWN. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1924.

Reviewed by ROBERT CORTES HOLLIDAY

ALICE BROWN, a creative artist of native and original talent long proved, rather surprises us by her recent inclination toward an essay into the field of purely literary playfulness. "Anyhow," the reader says, as he opens the little volume, "Charles Lamb: A Play," "Alice Brown wouldn't do anything that she didn't want to do, nor would she do anything that she didn't do well." The preface to this "colloquy" states, as one would expect, that "it is not meant to chronicle the weather that beat upon Charles Lamb and his beloved Mary, but the stoutness of heart with which they met it." So there can be no quarrel with the author's playing hob with fact and time and place. The reader is sympathetically all set to receive the imaginatively distilled "essence of Charles Lamb's life, ripe with hidden drama."

To make no bones about speaking bluntly, he gets an awful shock. First thing, his conception of the madness in the Lamb household had been of something shadowy and legendary and perhaps not unromantic. To be plumped into a scene of blithering idiots, John and Charles and Mary, is a thing decidedly rasping upon the nerves. Much startled, he begins to question the good taste of this performance. Insanity stalking upon the boards, it strikes him, is hardly delicate humor for a well-bred audience today. And when, in this matter, the note is changed to what purports to be drama, the reader's discomfort grows much worse. When Mary murders her mother staringly before one's eyes the reader's feeling is one of horror—at the length to which evidently it is possible for an author of high standing to be betrayed.

The writer of this review recently had occasion to do considerable reading in connection with a hospital for stammerers and stutterers; owing to this, perhaps, he is especially conscious that among enlightened people now the affliction which was Charles Lamb's is not regarded as a joke. In addition to the characters of the Lamb family, the figures of Coleridge, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, *et al.*, are very sad. The conclusion is the height of sentimentality.

In sum, the reader's general reaction to this little play is the awakening of a suspicion that maybe, in his habit as he lived, Lamb was not altogether the enchanting fellow of the legend. Those who love their Lamb, and who would continue to love him, would perhaps do just as well to keep away from it. And those who have a concern for American literature will hope that the author will promptly revert to continuing the cultivation of her natural gifts, which are considerable.

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Sin Comes to Brattle Street

WILD MARRIAGE. By B. H. LEHMAN. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1925.

Reviewed by BERNARD DE VOTO

HOW many Harvard men, strolling down Brattle Street on the way to Fresh Pond, have amused themselves by imagining novels which would bring sin to that reverend thoroughfare, it is perhaps unkind to wonder. Such musings, musings which even a few weeks in Cambridge suffice to rouse, are now vindicated. For with "Wild Marriage" sin comes to Brattle Street. And not only is the sinner the son of a professor at Harvard, but his name is Dunster and he is the direct line of the first president Dunster himself.

"Wild Marriage," though it concerns the life of a young man who is at least nominally a Harvard student, is not a college novel. It is peopled by the chaste precisians of the Cambridge world and its machinery turns on a professor, his assistant, and even a dean. But there is no aura of alcohol, profanity, or petting; no beery jesting or solemnity about God, ideals, or Cynara. Mr. Lehman waited to grow up before he published his novel. Consequently it lacks the mathematical diablerie, the Passing Show cosmetics, and the slightly rancid epigrams which have characterized the Big Three sweepstakes of recent years—in an order better kept anonymous. The impression he leaves is not one of precocity unsupported by depth. He is suave and sophisticated, where he might have been only smart and assured.

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The Cambridge of charities, discussion clubs, and the concerts at Sanders Theater knew what to dread when Elam Dunster came to Harvard. For, though he was the son of a professor of geology, his mother had taken him to Europe when she fled there with a lover, many years ago. Nor has Cambridge been able to justify the providence that has kept Berenice both happy and wealthy in her sin and has permitted Elam to develop into a handsome young man quite unashamed of his mother's past. Even Professor Dunster does not know whether to be pleased or dismayed by the decision which has brought his son home to attend an American college. But everyone knows what to think when Elam, after displaying literary talent and philandering with the star of "Falling Petals," is away from Cambridge over night with Madeleine Colquhom, the wife of his father's assistant. Heredity has a place in Cambridge categories.

Elam is not in love with Madeleine. She merely satisfies the conventions of a poet whose experience has been continental—till their tentative innocence compromises her, after which he lapses into adolescence and resolves to offer her a life of loveless devotion so that she may fulfil herself loving him. They are restored to sanity, and the stuttering horror of Cambridge is allayed, when Berenice, the sinner, charmingly confronts the village and explains Elam to Madeleine.

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Though nothing extraordinary in substance, the novel is made distinguished by manner and detail. Mr. Lehman recreates perfectly the difficult scene of Cambridge; with quiet mirth and a great deal of deftness he has gone behind the walls that provoke such musings on Brattle Street and has given us the essence of what he found there. The reader breathes Cambridge air and hears Cambridge talk. The individuality of this New England Stonehenge is conveyed as effectively as was ever that of Zenith or Spoon River.

A few vestiges of the classroom show that Mr. Lehman has not yet been long enough away from Harvard. The style has its moments of preciosity. Elam's literary talent impedes the narrative. And Elam himself, as a character, suggests that his creator has allowed the shibboleth of "indifference" to impress him too long. The other characters are splendidly done, Berenice most of all. She lights up every page she touches; and the professor, Madeleine, and Mrs. Couden are just less satisfying than she. All these, and the multitude of Cambridge folk, so economically and so graphically pictured, make the reader impatient with the contradictions of Elam. Mr. Lehman, painting a man who he alleges is a sophisticated thinker, should not have let him be even occasionally immature.

But "Wild Marriage" (the inflammatory title belies an honest book) is a distinguished novel, one that moves rapidly and sanely, one that is not easily laid aside nor soon forgotten. Best of all, it is devoid of thesis and of pose. Of its own right it enjoins respect, and it suggests that Mr. Lehman's future will be whatever he may want it to be.

Maugham's Latest

THE PAINTED VEIL. By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. New York: George H. Doran Co. 1925. $2 net.

Reviewed by STANLEY WENT

MR. Maugham wastes little time in preliminaries but plunges precipitately into the middle of things. I can only do him justice by quoting the first page of his new novel verbatim.

She gave a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Notwithstanding the darkness of the shuttered room he saw her face on a sudden distraught with terror.

"Some one just tried the door."

"Well, perhaps it was the amah, or one of the boys."

"They never come at this time. They know I always sleep after tiffin."

"Who else could it be?"

"Walter," she whispered, her lips trembling.

She pointed to his shoes. He tried to put them on, but his nervousness, for her alarm was affecting him, made him clumsy, and besides, they were on the tight side. With a faint gasp of impatience she gave him a shoe-horn. She slipped into a kimono and in her bare feet went over to her dressing-table. Her hair was shingled and with a comb she had repaired its disorder before he had laced his second shoe. She handed him his coat.

"How shall I get out?"

"You'd better wait a bit. I'll look out and see that it's all right."

Blake at Hampstead. From "William Blake in This World," by Harold Bruce (Harcourt, Brace)

Naturally the gentle reader is startled into attention, takes a firm grip on the covers and settles down to the story with the pleasing assurance that he is in for an agreeable series of possibly disagreeable thrills.

A clever piece of salesmanship! Of course it is. But it is a good deal more than just that. If the purpose was salesmanship the execution is consummate art.

There are just 169 words on that first page. It is an instructive lesson in the art of compression to itemize the information and suggestion that the author has managed to get into those 169 words:

Item: The scene is an English colony in the Orient.

Item: An adulterous episode has just taken place.

Item: It has been discovered or suspected, probably by the injured husband.

Item: The gentleman concerned is of unstable character, prone to pass from unreasoning optimism (note the cheery suggestion that it may only be the amah) to the borders of panic (note the difficulty with the shoe).

Item: He is inclined to vanity (note the tight shoes).

Item: The lady's character has its practical as well as its romantic side (note the alert proffer of a shoe-horn).

All this in 169 words, and an advertisement of the advantages of shingled hair for certain occasions thrown in gratis. The Victorians would have taken up three-fourths of volume one with the necessary preliminaries to the devastating discovery. The very modern Mr. Maugham flashes, as it were, a picture and a pungent title upon the screen, and his reader knows not only what the story is about but has a pretty fair idea of the kind of people he is dealing with.

Not even the fleet Mr. Nurmi can run the second mile quite as fast as the first, and it is hardly to be expected that the break-neck pace set by Mr. Maugham at the beginning should be carried throughout the book. Indeed, if both pace and compression were kept up, there would hardly be a book at all. Nevertheless, page 1, quoted *in extenso*, gives as much information about the story as any reviewer can reasonably be expected to give. With Mr. Maugham's art it is impossible to have any quarrel. As to his taste there may fairly be differences of opinion. This story is intensely interesting on account of the ingenious twist which the author has given to a commonplace situation, as well as for the admirable characterization of the three individuals who form the points of the triangle; but really Mr. Maugham is rather cynically unpleasant when, having led us to believe that we are dealing with a reformed and virtuous heroine, he throws her again without warning into the arms of her rather ridiculous paramour. This is a physical episode that leaves one with a sense of physical disgust.

Dramatist Turned Novelist

PRISONERS. By FRANZ MOLNAR. Translated from the Hungarian by Joseph Szebenyei. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1925. $2.50.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

WRITING in New York City, and in the year 1925, it is extremely difficult to dissociate the novelist of "Prisoners" from the dramatic author of "Liliom," "The Swan," and "The Guardsman"; yet some such dissociation is necessary if we are fairly to judge the first novel by Franz Molnar to appear in English. With our ears echoing all the ill-considered eulogies evoked by the Hungarian's plays, it would be easy to invest this simple story with an importance it does not possess. For it is really very simple and quite trivial: a small, competent piece of fiction, and little more. It should not be taken too seriously.

But we cannot rid ourselves of the knowledge that Molnar is a dramatist, a successful dramatist; and, knowing this, we are struck forcibly by the fact that in this novel the author has made no use of his dramatic powers, choosing instead to employ his powers of narration. Dramatic as the story is in its conception, it is determinedly undramatic in its execution; not one scene has been developed after the manner of the playwright; the material has all been subjected to the story-teller's art. And as a story-teller Molnar is eminently successful, although limited in this instance by the tale he has chosen to recount. It is slight and it is unplausible; but one reads it to the end with a continuous sense of anticipation, for the author has the gift of directing the reader's interest to the page always just ahead. His art in "Prisoners" is that of the unpretentious raconteur: he tells his story easily, directly, as before his own fire he might tell it to a friend, and the reader listens readily. No psychological analyses halt the narrative, the characters exist by virtue of their actions, the tale moves evenly to its close. Here is an art learned, perhaps, in the trade of journalism, that Molnar has practiced so assiduously; but it is a fine product of journalism, not the crude thing itself.

The place is Budapest, and the first scene is in the old city prison, to which Lenke Rimmer, youthful daughter of the warden, has come to live for the brief interval between the completion of her formal education and her marriage to Nicholas Chathy, a fledgling of the law. Lenke is an innocent, colorless product of middle-class respectability; Nicholas is a decent, industrious, rather dull young fellow. Their destiny seems clear: they will marry and produce a great number of children, all of whom will be brought up with clean hands and faces, and with a proper respect for State and Church. But fate plays a pawn in the person of Riza Nagy, a comely, pastry-shop cashier, with a lurid past behind her; and on the chess-board there appear unanticipated patterns. Riza steals, and Nicholas is engaged to defend her. Riza passion-

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