

Commissioner of Education. But, meanwhile, it bears rather hard on unambitious, pleasure-loving folk who read for the mere vile motive of diversion, ignoring for hours at a time the duties of mental growth and moral fortification—a careless crew, no doubt, often indifferent to the useful lesson and the elevation of large bodies of their fellow-citizens and the improvement of their neighbours' minds, but in the main harmless. Leave us Mr. Chesterton, gentlemen of the school board and ladies of the Twentieth Century Thinking Circle, for though only thirty-two and sometimes rather silly, though seldom accurate and never by any chance instructive, he is about the only really living thing to be found in this field of letters. It so happens that the critics with wider knowledge seem half-dead as the result of its acquisition, and the deeper ones are already half-interred. All that we have left is this young man turning somersaults among the tombs.

Amiens, the city in which he lived so long, is to erect a statue to the memory of Jules Verne. In commenting upon this action, Jules Verne and E. A. Poe, *Les Annales*, of Paris, imparts the entertaining information that Jules Verne owes the idea of his most widely read book, *The Tour of the World in Eighty Days*, to his study of Edgar Allan Poe. According to *Les Annales*, Verne, in 1863, contributed a critical paper on Poe to the *Musée des Familles*. In this article the author of *The Mysterious Island* undertook to analyse the entire work of the bizarre American storyteller. He passed in review the famous tales known to all the world, such as "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," "The Gold Bug," "The Purloined Letter," and "The Voyage of Hans Pfall." Before ending his study by a long analysis of the "Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym," Verne wrote the following lines:

I shall end this list by citing the tale entitled "The Week of Three Sundays." It is of a kind less grim but still bizarre.

How can a week of three Sundays exist?

Perfectly, for three individuals, and Poe proves it.

To begin with, the earth has a circumference of twenty-five thousand miles and turns on its axis in twenty-four hours. That is a speed of about a thousand miles an hour.

Let us suppose that the first individual leaves London and goes a thousand miles eastward. He will see the sun an hour before the second one, who remains motionless.

At the end of a thousand other miles he will see it two hours before. At the end of his tour of the world, coming back to his point of departure, he will have gained an entire day over the second individual.

Let the third individual accomplish the same voyage, under the same conditions, but in the opposite direction; after girdling the earth, he will have lost a day.

What, then, will happen to the three personages reunited on a Sunday at the point of departure?

For the first, Sunday was yesterday, the second to-day, the third to-morrow.

As a book by itself, the collection of "touched-up" biographical sketches by Mr. Richard Harding Davis which has just appeared from the press of Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons is of no material importance, and will probably be considered by those who have appraised Mr. Davis's work in the past at its really high value as decidedly disappointing. If, on the other hand, it is read as a book which throws a light on the sources of some of its author's best works of fiction, it is undeniably entertaining. The secret of the power of the real story teller, of our own time at least, is less any sheer imagination than his ability to seize upon a genuine career or some incident of actual life and adapt it to his purposes, heightening the effect by the adroit touch and the discreet elimination. In *Real Soldiers of Fortune* Mr. Davis has said nothing of the filibuster Boynton, who was supposed to have been the original of Captain Burke of *Soldiers of Fortune*, and who, according to a startling newspaper story of a few weeks ago, was credited with the torpedoing of the Russian fleet; but in his account of the career of William Walker one can find the entire foundation for the Honduranian chapters of *Captain Macklin*. Not only do Walker's

Real Soldiers of Fortune

invasion and that of General Laguerre run along parallel lines, not only is the ragged, footsore Foreign Legion of the work of fiction modelled after that dare-devil group of men with which Walker did so much and which he ruled with so heavy and yet so just a hand, but the unscrupulous American financial interests, with strong influence at the government at Washington, which brought about the fall from power of Macklin and his chief, were exactly the interests which ultimately defeated Walker and re-established in Nicaragua a despotic and unstable government. The Fiske of the story is the Commodore Vanderbilt of fact, and the methods of the Isthmian Company are those employed by the line of steamships controlled by Vanderbilt in the time of Walker.

Another autumn book from Mr. Davis is the collection of his farces which have been presented on the stage during the past two winters. *The Dictator*, *The Galloper*, and *Miss Civilization* were all comparatively successful as plays, and we read them with some curiosity as to how much of their "go" was due to the acting and stage setting and how much to the cleverness of the lines themselves. *The Galloper* is striking in two respects. In the first place, the satire on the modern war correspondent in the first act is very much above the material of the average farce. Griggs, the Englishman who has served through ten campaigns and witnessed six coronations, and to maintain his dignity as dean of the war correspondents always travels with five horses and thirty-two boxes, is delightful. Then in this act there is a brisk touch where Blanche Bailey, with an eye to press notices, inquires whether Mr. Anstruther writes for a newspaper. "No," replies the American reporter, "he writes for the *London Times*." The other respect in which, to our mind, *The Galloper* is striking is because it contains the very flattest and the poorest attempt at humour of which Mr. Davis has ever been guilty in print.

Mr. Stewart Edward White, who after two years and a half of life on the Pacific coast is again in New York, brings us a

story which is new to us and which has all the elements that will appeal strongly to the most approved Sherlockian. It seems that a certain class was about to be graduated from a medical school.

**A Sherlock
Come to
Judgment**

Just before the ceremony of presenting the diplomas the Dean of the Faculty called the class together to listen to a brief informal address. "You are leaving this institution," he was pleased to say, "and you are supposed to be technically equipped—that is, whatever it has been in the power of the college to teach you has been taught. But, gentlemen, the technical side alone is not enough to qualify you for the successful practice of our profession. Medicine demands other attributes—the attribute of courage, the attribute of observation. I believe you to be possessed of these, yet I am going to ask you to submit to a slight test. Here, gentlemen, as you see, is a glass of water. Into it I pour a small amount of vinegar. Now I shall add a considerable dash of asafoetida, topping it with the carbolic acid which I pour from this vial. This is unquestionably a most noxious mixture, yet, gentlemen, as you will perceive, I dip my finger in the mixture and, withdrawing the finger, draw it across my lips. Now I should like to see how many of you are resolute enough to follow my example."

Uneasy glances were exchanged, but one by one the students stepped forward and with horrid grimaces underwent the ordeal. The Dean watched them narrowly, and when the last had finished the test he smiled with grim satisfaction. "Gentlemen," he said, "I commend you most heartily. As to your courage I have no longer any doubt. If it were possible to mark you for courage as you are marked for, let us say, anatomy or for chemistry, I should ungrudgingly give you all one hundred per cent. But, gentlemen, while I should mark you one hundred for courage, I am afraid that for observation I should be obliged to give you all zero. You did not perceive, gentlemen, that the finger that I dipped into the glass was not the finger that I drew across my lips."