

of the writer who lacks entirely sympathy for his reader is far more hopeless. Mr.

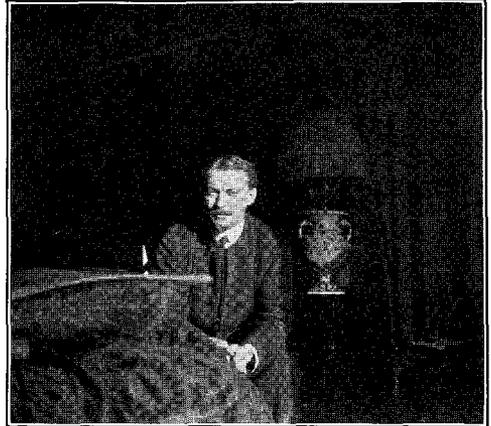
A Change of Heart

George Cram Cook, author of *The Chasm*, confesses that there was a time when he assumed the latter attitude, but that he has reformed. It was a cook who brought him to see the light. It was a matter of complete indifference to her whether anybody liked what she cooked. Her employer suffered and condemned her—until it happened to dawn upon him that in writing novels in the spirit of a remark ascribed to the late Commodore Vanderbilt, he was exceedingly like the cook.

The English writer, Mr. A. C. Fox-Davies, came to write fiction in a rather curious fashion. He was an authority on heraldry, the editor of Fairbairn's *Book of Crests*, of Dod's *Peerage*, and of a number of books re-



GEORGE CRAM COOK



UNCONVENTIONAL PORTRAITS
HENRY C. ROWLAND, AUTHOR OF "THE MAGNET"

lating to genealogies and armorial bearings. One day he stumbled on Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes" stories and became greatly interested. As a barrister, however, he did not always agree with Doyle's conclusions, and he wrote a sequel to one of the stories putting the criminal in it on trial and getting him acquitted on Sherlock Holmes's own facts. He sent this to Conan Doyle, who complimented him on it and suggested that he should write a series of his own. He wrote instead *The Mauleverer Murders* and then *The Dangerous Inheritance*.

The extraordinary case of Dr. Panchenko, the St. Petersburg physician, who has recently confessed to a series of murders by means of inoculating his victims with the germs of fatal diseases, was anticipated eighteen years ago in the late F. Marion Crawford's *Pietro Ghisleri*. When writing that story Mr. Crawford was for a time in doubt as to the manner in which the death of Lord Herbert Arden should be brought about. Finally he hit upon the idea of the table napkins infected with the germs of scarlet fever. To him the device seemed somewhat extravagant and far fetched, and it was eventually subjected to some rather supercilious comment on the part of the professional reviewers. Some years after the writing of the novel, however, Europe

was startled by the case of a French physician living near Paris. This man was a bacteriologist of considerable importance, possessed of an exceedingly attractive personality, and enjoying a prominent social standing. A time came, however, when curious stories began to be noised about. The physician had been in the habit of entertaining his friends with great hospitality, but it was noticed that after eating his dinners some one guest would die of a virulent malady. In one case it was cholera, in another scarlet fever, in another small-pox. At length matters came to a head. The physician was arrested, but he shot himself before he could be brought to trial. At a subsequent investigation, however, his servant, who was implicated to a certain degree, confessed that his master, who had become a dangerous maniac, had been in the habit before each of his dinners of infecting with the bacilli of these diseases the food or the wine of some particular guest.

A good deal has been told about the late David Graham Phillips's habits and methods of work, but chiefly on the physical side. It has, for instance, been stated repeatedly that he seldom went to his desk until after ten o'clock in the evening—a practice dating from his years of service as night editor on a city daily—and that when the mood was on him, he was indefatigable, writing from eight to ten hours at a stretch. Details of this sort satisfy an idle curiosity, but they are not valuable as helping to explain the quality of an author's literary product. On the other hand, any details that we may learn about a writer's mental processes are not only interesting but important; and from this side very little has been written about Mr. Phillips. One erroneous idea, that has been held by a good many of his readers, is that he had a rapid, fluent, and at times an over-hasty pen. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mr. Phillips himself admitted freely that from first to last he always found literary composition a labour—a labour of love, that he could not have shirked if he would—but none the less

a labour. A story, which he sometimes told at his own expense, illustrates this. In point of fact, he told the story in support of his contention that college courses in English are of negative value as a training in the craft of writing—so the story serves two purposes at once. It was shortly after his graduation from Princeton that he sought work as a reporter, and finally by offering his services for nothing, obtained a chance to show what he could do, on the leading daily in a Western city. The weather was cold and the temperature of the office somewhere below sixty; yet hour after hour Mr. Phillips would sit at his desk with the moisture rolling from his brow, in the anguish of trying to make literature from such material as: "Yesterday afternoon John Jones fell off a step-ladder and dislocated his shoulder." One day—it was the tenth of Mr. Phillips's services—the presiding genius of the paper happened to pass through the City Room, and stood for some minutes watching him. "Who is that young man?" he presently asked the City Editor. The latter explained. "Get rid of him!" came the curt edict. "But," expostulated the City Editor, "we are getting him for nothing!" "I don't care!" rejoined the Higher Power, "I don't care if he is paying for the privilege! Get rid of him at once: I can't bear to see any human being work so hard!"

Mr. Phillips outgrew his training in college English; but he never outgrew the habit of making the act of writing a slow and conscientious toil. Few writers of his degree of success have accepted adverse criticism in a more tolerant spirit; but there was one thing that he resented, and that was the accusation of careless haste. "People sometimes say that I write too fast," he protested not long before his death. "They said so about my *Light-Fingered Gentry*. They don't know anything about it! I don't believe any one ever wrote more slowly and laboriously. Every one of my books was written at least three times—" he paused a moment, then added in correction, "and when I say *three times*, it really means nine times, on account of my system of copying and revision."