

event we must welcome. Thanks to Dr. Ruhrah no more diminutions of substance threaten this quaint quarter of the past.

Apart from the basic value of a mass of textual matter literally rescued from destruction, we find in this chrestomathy or collection of choice passages, much that is as sound today as when it was written. Sound observation, sympathetic understanding is the unvarying characteristic. No precisian flummeries, no perverse theorizations clutter the thought of these ministers to stricken little angels. Thrice-blessed mercy supported by common-sense is the native mark set upon all pediatric writings. In fact it is in this speciality above all others that the physician first began to put himself in proper, simple, august relationship with the suffering patient.

Ruhrah covers his entire field from Hippocrates to the Heberdens (misprinted, by the way, "Herberdens" on the last 18 page-titles). He slights the ancients somewhat, but becomes ample and flowing from the appearance of the pediatric incunabula on. Several sections, as those devoted to Phaer and Glisson, are notably searching and exhaustive in treatment. Some have already appeared in the *Annals of Medical History*. The illustrations, mainly portraits and title-pages, add much to the book's value. (The legend under the cut on page 276, by the way, appears to bear the wrong attribution.) To each section are added the essential bio-bibliographical details as to author and his work, together with an evaluation of the latter. Ruhrah whimsically tilts at his professional coevals, again and again asserting that the present practice is *au fond* little improvement on the past. An illuminating foreword by Dr. Garrison, the ablest of American medical historians, to whom the volume is dedicated, stands as an introductory treat before this magisterial survey. The work contains at the end a reprint of Meissner's bibliography of paediatric literature plus fourteen pages of additional items compiled by Dr. Ruhrah.

Father Brown Again

THE INCREDULITY OF FATHER BROWN.
By GILBERT K. CHESTERTON. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1926. \$2.

THE *persistence* of Father Brown seems to indicate annual reappearances after the manner of the more famous Sherlock Holmes. Mr. Chesterton has indeed christened his first story in this third book of the exploits of his mystery-solving Catholic priest "The Resurrection of Father Brown." Snaith, the newspaper man from Kansas City, started the whole trouble. He really wanted Father Brown to disappear over a cliff—or something—"in the manner of Doctor Watson's hero" and for the purposes of world-wide publicity. Father Brown was at the time "something between a missionary and a parish priest," in a section of the northern coast of South America. And he had enemies, both in the leader of the iconoclastic party and in the leader of the more conservative side in one of those eternal factional disputes common to South America. It was to the interests of all that Father Brown should die and be resurrected, and thereby achieve a miracle which could afterward be pronounced spurious. Of course, Father Brown foiled them all, simply by possessing both common-sense and common integrity. A better type of American is introduced into the story, who pays him extravagant tribute.

There are other miracles in this book that are not, in fact, miracles. There is, for instance, "The Miracle of Moon Crescent," where laymen are shown as far more credulous and superstitious than one clear-thinking cleric with a knowledge of men and motives.

"But I thought you believed in miracles," cries one of the laymen. "Yes," answers Father Brown, "I believe in miracles. I believe in man-eating tigers, but I don't see them running about everywhere. If I want any miracles, I know where to get them."

And as well as refusing to be turned aside by red herrings of superstitious theory drawn across the trail of wholly human criminals, Father Brown is proved to have known something of animals,—of the way dogs act and why, for instance, in "The Oracle of the Dog."

Likewise "The Doom of the Darnaways" has no terrors for him, nor the black and white magic in "The Dagger with Wings," save as the wickedness in the heart of man is terrible or as monomania is

a terrible thing. For Father Brown is shown throughout, as has been the case heretofore, as an undistinguished individual of simple and rooted faith who solves the apparently monstrous and strange with the common sense that is uncommon.

His exploits make good reading, because his author has true inventiveness, an ability to make the preposterous seem plausible, and a mastery of tricks of story-construction that can often "spring" the unexpected climax.

These tales are highly-colored, dramatic, and in all of them the characters approach fantastic beings, as do the characters in all of Chesterton's fiction. But that does not make them less entertaining. One is intended to reach the conclusion that Father Brown is almost the only truly rational person in an aggregation of demented mystics and maniacal rationalists. But the circumstances under which he operates could only have been conceived by a Chesterton in the first place.

We shall continue to read with indulgence of Father Brown so often as he reappears, for we are fond of the dramatically fantastic, and Chesterton's pen has certainly not lost its cunning.

As a minor stricture, why is it that no Englishman, however cultivated, can ever reproduce American speech correctly? The phrasing and accent of New England are forever jumbled with that of the South and the Middle West. And to cite one instance only, out of many, Americans never speak of "flats" but of "apartments," and never, by any stretch of the imagination, would refer to an apartment-house as an hotel.

A New Mr. Curwood

THE BLACK HUNTER. A Novel of Old Quebec. By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD. New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. CURWOOD refutes one of the charges frequently made against romancers who achieve popular success on his level; the charge that they are too timid to venture from the field—Wild Western fiction, or Southwestern, or Canadian—with which they are commercially identified. After writing fully a dozen novels dealing with what he calls "the Canadian Northlands" of today, Mr. Curwood turns to eighteenth century history. He has projected a series of romances dealing with the Anglo-American and French pioneer, and the first has its setting in the New France of 1754-55. To the study of his materials and the planning of his narratives Mr. Curwood has given—he says—ten years' labor. "Foot by foot the hallowed ground has been travelled; letters written by hands dead these hundred and fifty years have been read, their spirit people brought to life again; the ancient stones of ruins that once rang with laughter and song and tragic happenings have been made to talk." And, it might be added, careful attention has been given to the pages of Parkman.

The initial result is a spirited story, which will profit lovers of Curwood a great deal more than his stories of Canadian wilds; for it does offer an accurate and informing picture of French-America at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, when it was the prey of such official jackals as the notorious Intendant, Bigot, and the crafty Governor-General, De Vaudreuil. Mr. Curwood has been remarkably careful about all his historical detail. The story itself has the characteristic Curwood ingredients—a rapid and essentially simple action, a wealth of incident and adventure, and an idyllic love element. There are base villains, noble heroes, splendid women, duels, massacres, hand-to-hand battles with Indians, terrible contests with nature at its fiercest, and all the rest. Adroit use is made of the contrast between the virtuous life of the frontier, hardy, pure, and generous, and the base and corrupt life of the official circles in Quebec, with their bribery, contract-steals, *amours*, frivolity, and treachery. Most of the frontier characters are invented. The French officials and their hangers-on are taken straight from history, and the sketches of even the lesser scoundrels of that period—De Pean, Nicolet, Talen, and the others—are clear and graphic.

The book, in short, is somewhere between the former Mr. Curwood and Sir Gilbert Parker and has enough of Mr. Curwood in it to sell at a rate which Sir Gilbert never dreamed of attaining. The author is skilled in maintaining his suspense. David Rock and Anne St. Denis plight their troth in the opening pages, but many obstacles threaten to prevent

their final union—the trials of war, jealousies and misunderstandings, and the crafty schemes of Bigot, who wants Anne himself. Equal skill is shown in managing the "big scenes." One is David braving instant death by throwing into an icy pool some officers who had sneered at Anne; another is David whipped through the streets of Quebec as a traitor under a false charge brought against him by Bigot; a third is David saving Anne from an Indian attack by accomplishing such a slaughter of savages, in knife-to-knife combat, as is seldom met with outside the gory closing pages of Rider Haggard. Over these scenes, and over such episodes as Anne's passionate hurt when she sees David being kissed, much against his will, by another French girl, true Curwood fans will hang with delight. In the end all turns out happily. Bigot is humiliated and punished, and David and Anne clasp hands against the murky background of the French and Indian War, now in full tide. Perhaps the next volume will tell the reader more about the events of this struggle. Meanwhile, "The Black Hunter" is equally good for the summer hammock and the movie studio.

The Jazz Era

SOUNDING BRASS. By ETHEL MANNIN. New York: Duffield & Co. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by GRACE FRANK

THIS is the fourth book that Miss Mannin (Mrs. J. A. Porteous) has published since 1923, and the days of this author are but twenty-six years. Of the remarkable crop of young women novelists harvested in England since the war she is therefore one of the youngest and most prolific.

Her latest story has to do with the rise of Jim—later James—Rickard, founder of Premier Publicity, Ltd., the only advertising service in London to guarantee success. Jim discovered very early in life that only money and power really mattered, and in the course of his metamorphosis from a wizened, undersized rat of a boy to a pompous, blatantly successful business man, he was unhampered by any prejudicial regard for the good, the true, and the beautiful. Incidentally, his career exploits the humbugger involved in the advertising game, and he acquires fortune and notoriety, never doubting but that the pure ideals of Service to the Public in the interests of British Trade are the highest, as well as the most remunerative, standard available. One of the best chapters in the book is devoted to a party in Chelsea during which Rickard, usually so glibly voluble at business dinners where "real celebrities" are present—"not just writers and poets and the like"—sits stiffly in outer darkness, disconcerted by his lack of small talk but stolidly unable to find anything gay or amusing in the epigrams tossed over his head.

Miss Mannin's connections with the technique of publicity under Sir Charles Higham have stood her in such good stead that she prefaces her novel with a note stating that all her characters are fictitious. Certainly several of them are convincing enough to merit this somewhat suggestive explanation. But her satire is not entirely directed against her aggressive little advertising expert and his conception of the value of publicity. The underlying theme of the book, taken from "Partners Again," is put in the form of a question: "You spend all your life trying to get somewhere, and then when you get there, where are you?" In the process of answering that question and of following Rickard's amorous adventures from the time when he considered "the woman game" much overrated to the day when a gaudy *liaison* almost wrecked his proper existence, the novel scrutinizes various other slogans and standards of the jazz era.

As a criticism of the age, however, it must not be taken too seriously. Convictions and sincerity are here, but Miss Mannin is after all a placer-miner: the superficial detritus has been washed for gold, a number of bright little nuggets glitter in the pan, but the deeper veins lying below the surface remain unexplored. Nor is her style, for all that pertinent epigrams grow like mushrooms on occasions, free from undistinguished journalese. Her book is nevertheless a clever piece of work and may be unreservedly recommended to the not too exigent reader: its theme is timely, several of its characters are adequately realized and others crisply caricatured, its satire is often brilliant and always deserved—on the whole, a smart, hard young novel, sprightly and surprisingly canny.

Out of the Usual

THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD. By AGATHA CHRISTIE. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

FOR some years Agatha Christie has been an adequate practitioner of the detective story. Her "The Murder on the Links" seemed to us distinctly above the average. Later we read "The Secret Adversary," "The Secret of Chimneys," and "Poirot Investigates." But up to the present work, which is her seventh, "The Murder on the Links" remained for us her best tale. Still, her name to a mystery novel meant more than usually interesting craftsmanship, even though today detective fiction numbers its practitioners by dozens. We have ceased, indeed, to be able to keep up with the voluminous J. S. Fletcher and our interest even in R. Austin Freeman has somewhat flagged. A. E. W. Mason's "The House of the Arrow" and Mary Roberts Rinehart's "The Red Lamp" were excellent. The late Isabel Ostrander did some rattling things in her day. But if one is a detective-story devotee one is always an Oliver Twist, and the belief persisted that this Agatha Christie was worth watching. In "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" we believe our faith to be fully justified.

To us at least "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" really turns a new trick in detective fiction, surely a difficult enough achievement "with the competition so strong." Most writers of detective stories develop their own special detectives, following the lead of the famous. Agatha Christie's pet detective is Hercule Poirot, a Frenchman. She has cherished him and his exploits through other tales. No, he did not disappear from a cliff finally, to necessitate perpetual resurrection! But in this her seventh book he has retired from "active practice." Nevertheless from such retirement springs his greatest achievement—and hers.

Not that any "Sherlock Holmes" glamour surrounding the figure of Hercule Poirot makes her present story as good as it is. Poirot is merely one factor in a tale so ingeniously constructed, so dextrously plotted as to warrant our complete admiration. It is unfortunate for us that we may not indicate here the most original element in Miss Christie's planning of the story. But that would be treachery to the author, and the reader has no right to be too well informed in advance. No real devotee of mystery stories would, for instance, commit the treachery of reading the end of a book first to discover how it is all to "come out." That would be half-witted, destroying his whole pleasure of anticipation.

Suffice it to say that Miss Christie's dedication of the book is to one "who likes an orthodox detective story, murder, inquest, and suspicion falling on every one in turn!" So she set herself to write such an orthodox story, with the strange result that she has succeeded in producing one of the few notable for originality.

For those who prefer certain backgrounds to others for their mystery tales we may say that Miss Christie's are always English in setting. To those who hate "loose ends" we may remark that this author ties all her knots neatly and bites off the thread. Her characterization is sharp in outline, her motivation is sound, complications of the plot never "get away from her." Everything in the puzzle falls neatly into place, and the complete picture leaves upon us an ineradicable impression. There are no inexplicable and glozed-over details. It is all an almost mathematical demonstration so far as the fundamental brainwork goes. Yet that it is no mere clever intellectual exercise, witness the fact that the reader is left with the strongest emotions of pity and wonder over the disastrous coil the weak and erring weave. There are indications, in fact, of an even deeper psychological insight than can be actively exercised in a book of this kind. For a detective story must move. The author cannot pause to philosophize. But one is rather closer in touch, in this tale, with the mad logic of actual criminality, with the criminal as a mainly average human being with one tragic twist, than is at all usual.

We do not overpraise this story, we believe, when we say that it should go on the shelf with the books of first rank in its field. The detective story pure and simple has as definite limitations of form as the sonnet in poetry. Within these limitations, with admirable structural art, Miss Christie has genuinely achieved.

The BOWLING GREEN

During the absence of Mr. Morley in Europe general contributions will be run in his column.

Peacock Seas

(Etched in Bermuda)
SUMMER'S ISLE

THE cloud-crenated sky's deep-tilted bowl
Pours the ceaseless sea
In endless libation on your ribboned beach.
Out of the shore,
Flushed faintly by the kiss of lipping waves,
Stitched to the cliffs with sleek sequins of bay leaves,
Firm muscled rocks hint the pride of your strength.

Guarded by reefs crouching like Cerberus,
To leap unsuspected at the keel of a foe,
You hide your might in a lonely sea;
Cover your power with shell-tinted bloom;
Shawl your strength with magenta and red,
Quietly, watchfully, laved by the years.

There were men who knew the might of your haven,
Men whose brawn twinned the power of your rocks,
Privateers who knotted your strength with their own.
Settling at last to be lulled by the sea,
Drumming ceaseless lure on your taut-ribbed shore,
They fathered a race
Who yawn over lily fields.

—GLORIA GODDARD.

MIDOCEAN

"THERE'S a little left over," God said,
"Now that Eden's done. . . .
Slopes of whirled cedar and fountains
of sago;

Showers of bougainvillea and mangrove thickets,
With crabs scuttling scarlet legs along them;
Cactus vined to moony splendor and treed like altar
candelabra,

Dusty sage, hibiscus flame, and pawpaw poles—
A mad riot of hill and plain and tropic jungle:
Where shall I place these?

"Not where Thames swirls to the Channel, roofed
with trickling fog;
Not where the Seine sparkles,
Or the Hudson lisps under battlements older than
Rhineholds;

Not in the lush far meadows of my Himalayas,
Nor to oasis my golden Sahara;
Not where the kangaroo thumps along,
Or the alpaca shawls against the cold. . . .

"But midway of ocean, in a shivered atoll crescent,
Blossoming out of endless miles of spraying green,
Here I will toss this dazzling splinter of Eden,
Fringed with peacock seas,
As a kindly perch and a resting place
For my feathered children,
As they shuttle from spring to spring
Over endless waters."

—CLEMENT WOOD.

SIRENS

FROM the still depths of the ocean
They swam through slow eternities
To rise at last and lie in the sun
Cradled by opal seas.

Firm breasts like waves forever hushed,
Hair tossing like spray caught wooing the sun,
Fringed with magenta, dripping with blood,
Insatiable crimson lips tipping the life of the sea,
Of men,
They lie in crystal brightness
Cradled by opal waves.

Under brilliant moons they stretch uxorious limbs,
Flushed by coral crushed in their grasp;
Twine their throats with Spanish bayonets' pearly
tears;
Cool their lips at the frail chalice of transient cereus;
And dream in a cradle of opal seas.

Softly they call,
Harassed men come,
Sink between those opulent breasts,
Sink and dream,
Wooded from the corrupting tinkle of silver
To the bright wealth of sea and sky.

—GLORIA GODDARD.

QUESTIONNAIRE

AND God said,
"If I can thumb three tiny leaves together,
Dyed with three drops of magenta blood
From my heart's passion,
Jewelled with three creamy starry tears
From my dripping sword,
And make of these a bougainvillea starburst
To robe your trees with beauty,
Above your peacock seas,

"What have you done,
You who have bodies sleeker than bay leaves,
Paler than magnolia petals,
Taller than slim palms—
To blend together into laughing, leaping flowers
With wide white wings,
To comb back dishevelled strands of clouds?
What have you done—"

A sound of grunting,
Drowsy, indifferent, mired.

—CLEMENT WOOD.

Reader's Progress

(Continued from page 945)

thrill enjoyed when first he found his own fresh experience of the world set forth with enlightening comment. He has learned too much both of the world and of books. He has encountered too much trickery in both. A book is no longer an enchanter waving a wand, no longer—even though it be an inspired book—a superhuman oracle.

Yet what an eternally rich enjoyment still persists in the analyzing, comparing and searching of books! The rare phrase of gold, the rare ray of new light, the pulse of fresh imaginative power in a page idly turned, these are still rich rewards to the critical reader, nor altogether as rare as one might surmise.

The average reader, of course, remains for most of his life in the second stage of development, or else he would not be average. In a phase, life is more important to him than art. Books are still oracular. Certain manners of writing attract him more than others but he does not care more closely to study style. This is fortunate for many of our popular writers; but, on the other hand, we are far from advising the average reader that art is more important than life. Art is interpretation and adornment. The richer the life the more surely it will choose for itself those interpretations and adornments that most nearly merit the name of art, even though the value of its critical expression in regard to them remains unformed.

"A feature of the new novel by H. G. Wells—"The World of Mr. Clissold"—which is to be published in the autumn (the *Manchester Guardian* says in a recent issue) will be the introduction of a number of living personages under their own names. It will occupy three volumes, which are to appear successively. In his introduction to the book Wells says: 'It is a work of fiction, purely and completely. One thing which is something of an innovation has to be noted. A great number of real people are actually named in this story. It is, the author submits, impossible to get the full effect of contemporary life in which living ideas and movements play a dominant part without doing that. You cannot have a man like William Clissold going about the world of to-day and never meeting anybody one has ever heard of.'

"Some of these living personages are not only mentioned but more or less described. But always under their proper names. Dr. Jung is made to talk in a London flat. It is very much as he talked in a London flat. He appears because certain original ideas of his have been taken and woven into the Clissold point of view, and it was at once ungracious not to acknowledge the far-reaching suggestions that came from him and clumsy and self-important to make a footnote or prefatory note. Shaw again, the Shaw of the eighties, blows into a Kensington evening and Keynes lunches with Clissold."