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Comment on Current Books

THE CLUNY PROBLEM. By A. Fielding Knopf.

After a ball at a villa on the outskirts of the sleepy town of Cluny, famous for its monastic ruins, two English guests, one of them a famous financier, are found locked in one room, dead with pistols beside them. The swarm of detectives English and French, official and private, who descend upon the scene are forced to reject the obvious conclusion of a duel; but though they unearth many strange goings on at the villa Porte Bonheur, and much of the secret past of the principals in the tragedy, it is not until inspector Pointer of Scotland Yard sums it up in the last chapter that the pieces in the puzzle fall together. This is an outstanding detective story, and is well worth reading.

PIONEERS ALL! By Joseph Lewis French. Milton Bradley Company.

As the chapter headings and the foreword indicate, this book for boys in the Bradley "Quality" series covers practically all the phases of American pioneering, from Lewis and Clark across the continent by land to Lindbergh across the ocean by air. The explorer is represented by Lewis and Clark; the pioneer by Daniel Boone; the trapper by Kit Carson; the mountaineer by Fremont; the river pilot by Mark Twain; the aviator by Lindbergh; and so on, not to omit chapters upon the Wilderness Hunter, the Cowboy, the Prospector, the Lumberjack, the Sailor, the Engineer. Mr. French has compiled his stories mostly from standard chronicles—journals, biographies, and narratives—upon the various topics.



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ROUND UP. By Ring Lardner. Charles Scribner's Sons.

This volume contains a number of new stories by Mr. Lardner intermingled with the best of those previously published. We have thirty-five stories or sketches in all, dealing with as heterogeneous, typical, and interesting a mass of present-day Americans as could be found in a section of the bleachers at a ball game—mechanics, suburban clerks, automobile salesmen, flirtatious girls, bewildered old people, a prize fighter, some golf caddies, a sprinkling of professional men and their wives. Not one of the stories is dull. They are all entertaining, as O. Henry is entertaining. They are for the most part clever. Now and again some of them achieve effects deeper and more permanent than entertainment or cleverness. "The Golden Honeymoon," a story of two aged people at once very funny and very pathetic, handles the humor and pathos with a superb restraint and truth. "Champion" is a cool study of human baseness which leaves the reader hot. "The Love Nest" is sweeping yet artful satire. These stories are literature of no ordinary value.

SKIPPY. By Percy Crosby. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

We have long followed Skippy in Crosby's "strips" and in the pictures he has done in the past for Life. From the first it was evident that Skippy was a cut above the average "comic." Though entirely preserving his own fascinating identity, a younger brother of Tom Sawyer began to emerge—that is to say, a real boy, the peculiar mixture of sagacity, nonsense, nonchalance, melodrama, and burlesque that the Skippys of the world really are. And how accurately Crosby's swift pencil jotted him down! This wasn't mere cartooning or comic drawing, this was living draughtsmanship of inimitable and imperishable youth.

And now there is a novel all about Skippy, by one who was once the leader of the "Liberty Boys" out on Long Island, where he stored up his memories of the original Skippy. He has made a great stride indeed, has Crosby, since his war book, "The Rookie of the 13th Squad," composed of the comic strips he did for the American newspapers at the Front. This is a far more enduring contribution to the art of his period as well as

to the literature. For the alertness of Skippy is the most difficult art, brought off with casualness that amazes. And you can pick the book up anywhere and become highly amused. This is, in verity, the good old mediaeval life we all knew when we were only as high as Skippy.

AMERICA CHALLENGED. Lewis Carr. Macmillan.

"America has been waiting for a humanly understandable book on the farm problem. Lewis Carr has given it to us in 'America Challenged,'" says Virgil Jordan, chief economist of the National Industrial Conference Board. "On the one hand we have industry which can and does pay for common labor in its simplest terms the wage of \$4.95 a day. On the other hand we have agriculture which is able to pay for common labor in its simplest terms only twenty five cents a day." The farmer pays increased taxes, higher interest rates, and building costs, and bigger prices for supplies in the face of decreased prices for his products. The book not only describes the farmer's plight but offers a practical and sensible proposal for relief.

TIBERIUS CAESAR. By G. P. Baker. Dodd, Mead, and Company.

Two elements render a history of Tiberius a thing of perennial interest: the great conundrum of his character and the political significance of his reign. Mr. Baker's book faces both problems squarely, and presents with simplicity and directness the author's explanation of each. The accounts of the German campaigns and policies are particularly clear. The book is interesting reading and would appeal to any and every type of reader.

COLORED PAPER—There has been a slavish devotion to white or cream paper which denied the typographer one legitimate way of adding to the character of his book. Mr. Roger's "Wedgewood Medallion" was a notable instance of colored paper used for a limited edition. There have been a few other tentative attempts. Here is another, Hervey Allen's "Sarah Simon, Character Atlantean," issued by Doubleday, Doran, and printed by Richard Ellis at the Georgian Press. The paper is a light blue (somewhat too heavy to be quite right) which, with the Gallic type used, serves admirably to get away from the inevitable white. It is an interestingly conceived and a well-executed book. Three hundred and eleven copies have been printed.

Answer
to question on page 25

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