



ESTHER GOULD'S BOOK REVIEW AND TRAVEL PAGE



MR. ELLIS IN THE SOUTH SEAS

In January 1816 the Reverend Mr. Ellis and his wife left England, as they believed, forever, to embark on a voyage to the South Seas, where Mr. Ellis would take up his duties as a missionary. Years later, in 1829 after his return to England Mr. Ellis "amidst incessant public engagements" took up his pen to write a long and extremely interesting account of those missionary experiences.

His "Polynesian Researches" are spirited, scholarly, and not without literary distinction. We are filled again, on reading it, with wonder at the courage of the men who went out into a world so little known in their small sailing vessels, to deal with savages. The courage and the supreme arrogance of those who ventured into this world so completely alien and tried to bring it to their own way of thinking. It was as if today one were to wander into a hardware shop and suggest casually that the owner throw out his own stock and put in your own line which happens to be drygoods. But that arrogance in their day was called religious faith and armed with it these people went confidently out to be a nine days' wonder to the savages. That these savages could be happy as they were, seemed impossible to Mr. Ellis, he

says, "The South Sea Islanders appear under circumstances peculiarly favourable to happiness, but their idolatry exhibits them as removed to the farthest extreme from such a state."

How the savages reacted to the benign administrations of the missionaries can be seen in many little sidelights, such as, "The school was a most interesting institution, I frequently visited it, and was surprised to learn that, though treated with every kindness, the young scholars, when an opportunity occurred, frequently left the school and fled to their native woods, where every effort to discover the retreat, or to reclaim them, proved ineffectual." Poor Mr. Ellis.

The book is good reading. Aside from amusement it contains plenty of excellent information.

AN UNWIELDY NOVEL

By Edith Wharton

D. Appleton & Co.

"Hudson River Bracketed" is more or less an attempted return on the part of Edith Wharton to her old manner. In "Mother's Recompense" she wrote a rather sketchy and hasty novel, in "The Children" a brilliant satire, in this, her latest book, she has written a full length novel of

quite wide scope, but falling far short, alas, of her best work.

Having just seen the play, "The Age of Innocence" and been reminded how perfect were Edith Wharton's three great books, it is a disappointment to turn back to "Hudson River Bracketed." The slightly unwieldy title comes, by the way, from a style of architecture of which a house that figures in the book is an example.

In the description of Vance Weston and his home in Euphoria, Illinois, we might be in the pages of Sinclair Lewis. Vance is a sensitive youth, one of those who abound in fiction, who will one day make a name for himself in the pursuit of literature. He goes away from his home, down east and comes in contact with two girls, both of whom it is fairly certain that he will marry—not both at once, but singly as occasion offers. He does and he also becomes a great writer. But in none of these things does he greatly move us.

The plot of the book is unwieldy, it lacks the touch of deftness, clarity, the strength to bring it together. The characterization is hazy, sometimes falling almost to the level of caricature. Here and there, but all too seldom, as the sun on a cloudy day now and then breaks through a rift in the clouds, the real genius of Edith Wharton for one brilliant instant, can be seen.

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