

Book Reviews

By John Philip Morris

The very first reaction after reading Mr. Lytton Strachey's **BOOKS AND CHARACTERS** is the realization of the wonderful strides that he has made since 1905 and 1906, the date of the earliest essays included and your second is the fact that Mr. Strachey is himself dateless.

Those earlier essays lack the subtleness and the delicate irony that have come to be the hallmark of the man and are simply articles—interesting perhaps or not according to the amount of interest held for the reader by the subject.

Mr. Strachey is perhaps the loneliest man in the world. And yet that is an ill advised sentence for Mr. Strachey is not in the world, not our world at least. He dwells somewhere in the past and there is nothing in his writings to show his awareness of any event since about 1890.

While the rest of us are hanging by our teeth to the edge of an abyss and gazing open mouthed at a red gulf labeled tomorrow, he, comfortably obvious of our reign of terror, pens essay after essay on such faintly known and totally extinguished personages as Mr. Creevey, Henri Beyle or Mme. Du Deffand.

Precious-precious used in its most pernicious sense is the only word that describes his writing. It is as hard to bear as the sight of a banquet to a starving man.

Another annoying article in **BOOKS AND CHARACTERS** is Mr. Strachey's habit of lapsing into French "in a friendly fashion." It is a compliment, perhaps, to consider all his readers as bilingual but it is hard on us whose French runs about 7 inches to the yard to laboriously translate some chuckled over epigram and then find the key word not in our vocabulary.

Mr. Strachey is a great and a profound scholar. His every sentence shows the years he has spent in reading and research and the mastery he has of those facts and our language so clearly as to make us realize what ignorant, pallid worms we comparatively are. **BOOKS AND CHARACTERS** is like a long needed soaking shower to soften the earth so that we worms can wiggle easier upward toward the light, the light of knowledge.

Just as much ethnological difference as exists between an African negro and a Caucasian after centuries of civilization lies between **BOOKS AND CHARACTERS** and **BATOULA**.

This book, as you know is by Rene Maran, an African negro and was last year awarded the Prix Goncourt, the literary laurel crown of France.

I read it twice. First for what it was and then again from a purely literary standpoint.

Literarily the book shows that Mr.

Maran's reading has been solely of French authors and that he has imbibed their faults as well as some of the better of their qualities. The jerky sentence structure, the unsupported exclamations, the manner of scenic description, the painstaking recital of intimate details all carry back to Zola and the French realists.

The book is merely a connected series of incidents showing the daily life and thoughts of the negro after his contact with the whites. It lacks plot, its abundant use of native words impede sustained thought and it is mostly scenic description.

As a piece of propaganda it is a terrible and scathing indictment of civilization in its contact with the aborigine. The cruelty, lust and greed that has everywhere impelled the colonizer are shown from the viewpoint of their victims and we cannot read **BATOULA** without feeling ashamed, and it should be read by everyone.

What centuries separate Mr. Strachey and Mr. Bataoula. I can imagine no more vivid contrast than Mr. Strachey at his desk writing passionately and blamelessly of some faint blameless ghost and Bataoula beating on the lingshas to summon other savage senseless living lumps of flesh to savage rites. And of such as these is the kingdom of Books.

John Philip Morris.

"A critic should have a good memory," says a writer. That's true; he should never forget that he has faults of his own.—Boston Transcript.

E. BOHNEN WINS CADDY TOURNEY AT INDIAN HILL

Eston Bohnen, one of the star caddies at Indian Hill, won the championship of the caddies in the hard-fought tournament which closed Monday, August 28. Bohnen was hard pressed by Jack McFadzean, who annexed the preliminary tournament last month. Both the winners received medals as tokens of their victory.

In the second flight, Winston Smith came in with the lowest score, with William Quinn as runner up. The two highest in the second flight received a set of clubs as prizes. Robert Miskelly won the third flight and Peter Bohnen the fourth.

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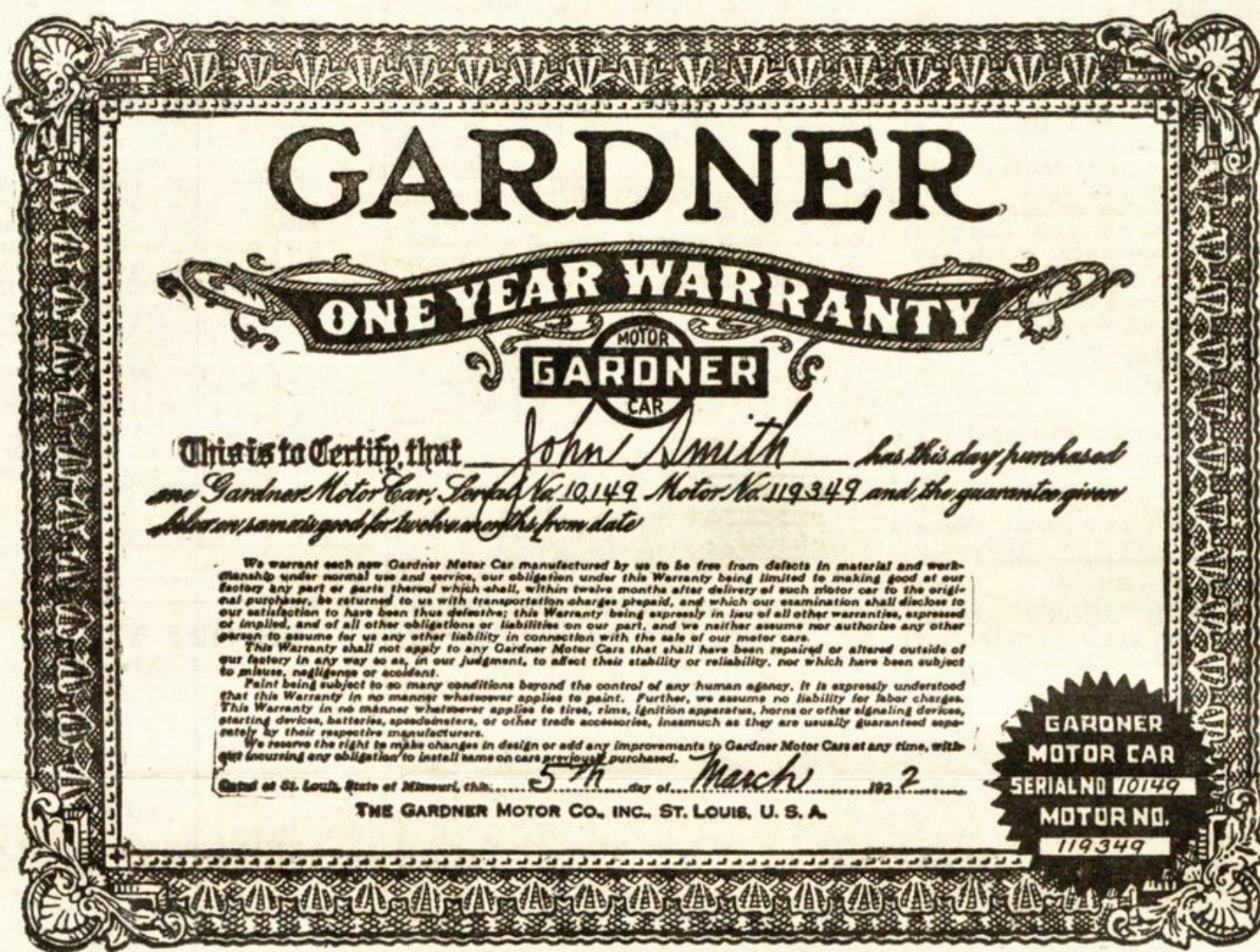
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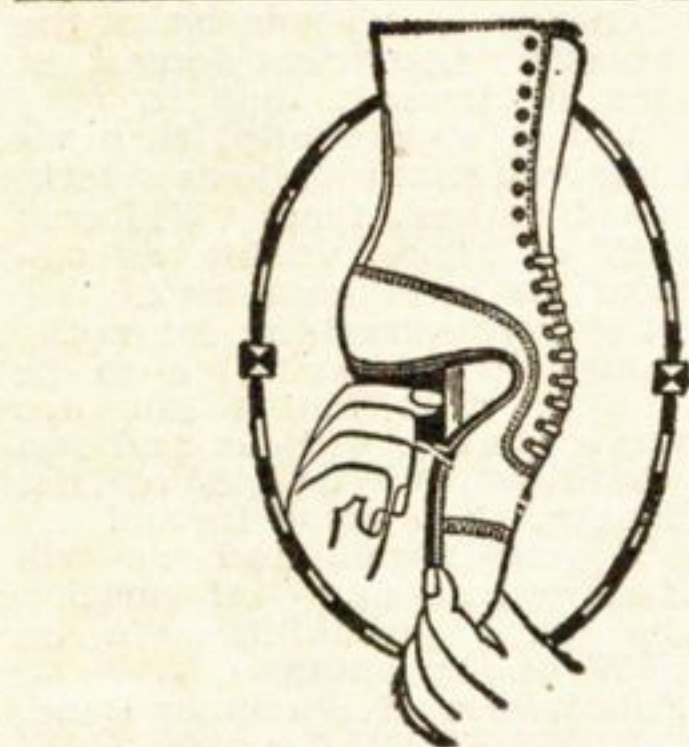
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