

## LITERARY EDITION



## The Fall's Fiction

## REVEALING GLORY

The adoration of Arthur Machen is one of the hallmarks of our school. Cabell and I consider him one of the master writers of the age. Mencken agrees with me that he is one of the few contemporaneous writers that will remain revealed to posterity, and listen to what Van Vetchen and I have written:

"Machen's genius burns so deeply, his power is so wonderful....his grace, his rare estatic grace is perpetual and unerving....Machen is indeed the flea's eyebrows."

Do you wonder then that we all, Carl, James, Hugo and John were equally thrilled to open to the first page of THE SECRET GLORY. The book is another exotic masterpiece. It proves, however, once again that Machen is not for the masses. His fancies are too delicate, his portions too slight, his condiments too unusual to please the public palate.

And yet who but a genius could take Pottishly the mysticism surrounding the holy grail and the materialism and brutality of an English Public School and splice the two into a work of art.

Mr. Machen has added to his main theme many little excursions into un-frequented but interesting byways and has given us a disguise fit for the gods, but fit for the gods alone.

The humor of Cabell, of Saltus, of Van Vetchen, of Genius in short is Machen's also and as the beauty of a woman may be best revealed through some turn of the arm, so Machen's humor stands revealed in the turning of a phrase.

He proves once again that given other things in sufficiency plot may be dispensed with and may even sometimes prove a hindrance.

We used to literarily visit English public schools with Tom Brown as our Badecker, but the last decade has given us other guides and we now see clearly that however much they are suited for Empire Builders they are even worse crushers of thought and individuality than an American University and turn out much the same stamp of men. They are one of the most significant and tenacious survivals of the Middle Ages and as long as their graduates govern England and the Empire, Gallipolis and Armistars are inevitable.

Machen is an acquired taste, but one to which it is easy to become a slave. However, there truly is no law in this land that compels one man to read the books that another has written and Harold Bell Wright and Robert Chambers are still writing and Harcourt Brace & Co. stand ready to publish just as many copies of BAB-ITT as they find purchasers for.

## BEN AGAIN

An author's books are only his reactions of life and if we know the mind and environment of the man they are rarely hard to analyze.

So if you find an author possessed of a little more than the average amount of sex and having the unhappy artistic temperament and force him six days a week to write a short story to be published in a daily paper catering to the Home he will store up repressions until after the two hundredth story he simply must write a sex surcharged novel like GARGOYLES and after the four hundredth story he will discharge all his repressions into such a MALLARE as will make the intelligencia gasp and the Philistines call in the police to the mutual discomfort of author, illustrator and publisher.

Recalling Sentimental Tommy we might label either book as Tid Bits that would have stopped A Thousand Afternoons from Marching.

But let us dismiss MALLARE as Mr. Ben Hecht's mental jag and look a little at the milder GARGOYLES, that "Devastating" novel that has not been suppressed yet.

GARGOYLES is a book about the grinning images that look down from the dirty Notre Dames of Chicago, a book of dirty linen and living washed out at State and Madison, a story of the rattling skeletons and old corsets and shoes that lurk in every closet. It is Pot Bouille by Women In Love, the Memoirs of the Dead—and petrefied—Life of an American reporter.

There are very few lives that would bear microscopic inspection and the lives of the group that Ben has created in GARGOYLES are no exception to the rule. A Chicago widow, her son and her two daughters, their husbands and wives and their affinities of these all seeking experiences and all clashing with life. All choked at times like a gargoyle mouth with leaves and last year's birds nests and all breaking thru the oppressions and repressions, and pouring forth in floods to finally check to a dreary drizzle and then to a dying drip.

But we must feel that the Basines were exceptionally lewd lot and regret that Ben has reversed the usual order of things, being Ben, and only recounts

the astericks. They surely must sometimes have had some other thoughts. But as they are visualized for us they are only the grinning images that look down from the dirty Notre Dames of Chicago.

The severest criticism we can make about GARGOYLES however is from the classic viewpoint. As a novel it lacks form, as a story continuity, as a book it lacks fascination. The jacket says that the stuff of twenty novels is poured, lavishly into its pages. However, hash is no more palatable because of the fact that it contains everything from the left over steak to a misplaced trouser button, and GARGOYLES is simply literary hash.

And yet—and yet referring once more to our dictionary we read again that a Gargoyle is merely a throat something that carries off an excess. Perhaps the title was purely personal and if so I believe that Mr. Hecht must be a happier and a more contented man for having written it. If we read it we may be neither happier nor more contented but we will know and understand Ben Hecht and after all the greatest study for mankind is man.

## GOOD PLAYS

Not a tittle of the honor and admiration they deserve is being given with the Stewart Kidd Company or Mr. Frank Shay for the work they are doing in preserving for posterity the drama of to-day, Stewart Kidd probably publish each year as many volumes of plays as all the other American publishers combined and in Mr. Shay they have an exceptionally able editor.

His great compilation of FIFTY CONTEMPORARY ONE ACT PLAYS has been followed by his CONTEMPORARY ONE ACT PLAYS OF 1921. The new book contains twenty little dramas by as many American playwrights.

The collection ranges from farce to tragedy with all the variations that lie between.

Of course, it takes the peculiar intelligence of the producer to read a play and unfaithfully be able to vividly visualize whether or not it will be a success behind the footlights and whether it has the necessary punch to "lift 'em out of their seats." To us laymen a play that reads poorly may have just that something necessary to insure success, while contrariwise, we, the uninitiated may read a script that fairly drips fat and seems surcharged with success and yet later when it appears as a play it may drag and end in a dreary failure.

However, the bulk of Mr. Shay's selections read well and I think that they have all proven stage successes.

Naturally some of the included plays seem better than others. To my mind, The Dreamy Kid by that magnificent artist Eugene O'Neill with its splendid climax is probably the best of the book and altho no one has a higher regard for her poetry than I and altho I agree with Mr. Shay that her Aria da Capo is an unusual and an unusually good play but still Two Slaterns and A King by Edna St. Vincent Milady is by far the poorest contribution.

Naturally also with but twenty chosen from the young host of our playwrights there are many names among the missing but we regret that our own Mark O'Dea is not represented. Any one of the women of Red Bud would grace the collection.

Box office prices have risen so that few of us can afford to attend the theatre as often as we wish. But few of us cannot afford the price of this book and with it we can sit at home and enjoy the best. Yea, by using our rusted imaginations we can see the plays performed by companies that contain only our favorite stars and a turn of the page will let us change the play to meet each changing mood. Let us then give thanks to Mr. Shay and to Stewart Kidd and buy the book.

## A NEW WIZARD

Just as some of us big kids look forward each fall to the Football Games, some to the annual Zane Grey book and some to the Holiday rush of business, so for the last fifteen years have our little brothers and sisters and sons and daughters held the first frost as a sign of the approach of a new Oz book.

It is many, many years now since first the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow issued from the brain of Frank Baum to be immortalized by his words and Neills' pictures and to start the feet of Montgomery and Stone on the road to fame. Still each year finds a new generation to whom they are new and dear and who read each of the fourteen stories that Mr. Baum wrote about them and their fantastic friends, and cry for more.

And now Montgomery is dead and sporting with the heavenly Lambs instead of those that belonged to the Lambs Club and Baum has also passed to the vaster studio to splash with the

comet's hair brushes. Yet Oz, the mighty kingdom stands altho Russia has fallen and Germany has gone to join Tyre.

From notes left by Mr. Baum, Ruth Plumly Thompson has lit the torch anew and in KABUMPO IN OZ she shows that she will prove a worthy successor and that for many years the Army of Oz will march on as steadily as J. Brown's soul.

Besides KABUMPO IN OZ, Reilly and Lee have sent me a new Teenie Weenie book, UNDER THE ROSE BUSH. And also a book of juvenile Japan, PANSY EYES. I wish I was of the age when the only interest that the Sunday Tribune had for me was to see the Teenie Weenies. Then on December 15, I would write as follows:

Dear Santa Claus, Just bring me KABUMPO IN OZ, THE TEENIE WEENIES, UNDER THE ROSE BUSH, PANSY EYES and I will have the merriest Xmas of my life.

John Phillip Morris.

## SPELL BINDERS

By Mrs. Margaret Culkin Banning  
Twelve years ago H. G. Wells launched *Ann Veronica*, the story of a feminist seeking her career outside of marriage. This wilful woman has, in some manner, intrigued almost every novelist ever since. She is the cause or curse of Hutchinson's *This Freedom*, and its American version *Spellbinders*, by Mrs. Margaret Culkin Banning.

In *Spellbinders*, Mrs. Gage Flandon is a completely successful wife, mother and social leader. She is successful in absorbing her husband's emotions in everything except her political career. The utterly devastating result to her marriage and to all that was fine in her personal and most intimate relationships, is the story of this American *Ann Veronica*. Gage Flandon is not a reactionary. But he is typical of that group of husbands who approve of modern woman and her careering—in other men's wives.

The psychic complexities of this common problem are caused by a wholly unique triangle. The wife's intellectual college friend, who has never married, is the third angle. She invades the Flandon marriage by her deep attachment to the wife. She makes her restless and self-conscious, and undermines her faith in marriage and domesticity as a complete experience. The husband's terrific resentment of his invaded love life, his conflict with himself over his own unjust attitudes, is as finely wrought psycho-analytical writing as can be found.

In curious contrast to this marital disintegration, is the marriage of Freda, a modern woman too, without the self-consciousness and endless self-analysis of college-bred Mrs. Flandon. The sheer romance and adventure which Freda brings to her love, relieves the mental tension of the central theme with interims of poetic beauty.

Underneath the confusions, the intolerable moments, the painful discussions of the more complex marriage, one feels a strong protest. The only event that can triumph over the ravages of constant psychoanalysis, is an exterior tragedy which diverts their emotions from themselves. This event dwarfs their personal tempest into saner focus. It leaves them with a sense of the eternal courtship and conquest in marriage. The book's ultimate protest is that you cannot rationalize things that are not rational, and you cannot modernize the things that are eternal.

RUTH WILE LEVY.

## CERTAIN PEOPLE

A novel by Kathleen Norris which has been called, by its publishers, an epic of the American family, and which lives up to its name—such is *Certain People of Importance*. To state in sweeping terms that Mrs. Norris' new book is good—or bad, would either one be distinctly incorrect. Individual viewpoint, considering both the faults and the virtues of the book, would evolve an answer to the question.

The story in *Certain People of Importance* is a delightful work of true literary art. While laid in the far west between thirty and fifty years ago, it is nevertheless interesting for its modernity. Fads and foibles may have changed since then, but fundamental characteristics have not. The latter live through time.

The Crabtree family of Crabtree's Crossing, Illinois, moved westward to California in the middle of the last century, and settled in San Francisco. The growth of the Crabtree and Company, spices, teas and coffees, and of Reuben Crabtree's family is hastily sketched in the first two or three chapters.

But the story really concerns old Reuben's grandchildren. Their difficulties in finding suitable life companions, with mothers and fathers whose only thoughts were of the family name, social position and material affluence of a prospective son or daughter-in-law, furnishes the thread of the story. Contrast plays a big part in this book—the contrast between the married life of one son or daughter and that of another. Family jealousies, arising from suspense over the disposition of Pa's money "when he dies," provides a keen element of subtle humor.

It is always the family. Never before have the follies of an overwhelming pride in the family tree been so deftly unmasked for Americans to learn that democracy of family is just as essential as democracy of government. Mrs. Norris shows, in *Certain People of Importance*, that many a family aristocracy and its unreasoning snobbishness is but a doomed house of cards. On what an unstable foundation it may be built!

However, to put it in the vernacular, Kathleen Norris' style is "not so good." Her story is marred by an uncolored narrative style of writing, although, at places, in strong emotional situations, she rises to a short-lived meteoric splendor. Lack of vividness causes her to be compared somewhat unfavorably with her novelist-husband, Frank Norris.

There are over thirty characters who play important parts in *Certain People of Importance*. So many characters takes away from the force of the story; the reader is forever being called upon to straighten them out in his mind.

It is beyond doubt that *Certain People of Importance* has a great fineness of quality running through it from cover to cover. While not a gripping story, Mrs. Norris' new book holds the reader's interest, and is bound to be a satisfaction to anyone who reads it.

Walter D. Peck, Jr.

## INDELIBLE

"Write me as one who loves his fellow man" is the underlying motif of "Indelible" by Elliott Paul, one of

the best books of the season and the first novel of a brand new author of undoubted genius. \* The big subject of creeds, prejudices, bigots and bigotry is refreshingly treated by means of a simple story fairly lit up with good natured ridicule, caustic chaff and genuine Yankee humor. Permeating it, interwoven with its theme, welding the life and love of its people is music—"the voice all people understand, the prophet of the higher universal things."

Mischa Borowsky, the Russian-Jewish immigrant and junk dealer in his second hand clothes, smoking his one "Pippin" (five cent cigar) a day, hoarding his pennies, changing them into dimes, and dimes into dollars so that his Lena might learn shripka (violin); and Lena, with the soul of an artist, her dark eyes sparkling, her raven hair, her cheeks flushed with the joy of owning the coveted violin, give one the same sympathetic heart throbs that Fannie Hurst evokes in "Humoresque."

The violin maker, Adolph Kugel, is a bit of characterization that falls not far short of being a masterpiece. He lives in an alley, "a hard place to find, but musicians whose names are on the tongues of nations have found it. The soda clerk of the drug store backing into the alley calls Adolph an 'old geezer.' Violinists who are rude to royalty call him 'Herr Kugel.' In either case Adolph smiles gently at the speaker, for he loves everybody, even his landlord to whom he owes rent. All violin makers are amiable. It is the makers of player pianos and phonographs who beat their wives."

So Lena Borowsky, with the violin Adolph Kugel had made, "a lady violin with grace, symmetry, and soul" enters the New England Conservatory of Music and there, meets and loves a fellow artist, Samuel Graydon, son of a different race and cultural heritage—with a narrow, puritanical background.

The story becomes a prose symphony with here and there choice bits of reflective philosophy—interludes,—in poetic form. The andante movement changes to adagio then to scherzo,—tragedy, collapse, almost ruin. With crescendo, Lena comes into her spiritual own again. God has many erasers—"Heritage, Poverty, Pestilence, War," but he cannot erase from the human soul the spark of divine fire that is "indelible."

The author cleverly stays on the surface when it comes to the inter-marriage question. He makes no great problem of it, since he artistically avoids all possible tragic objections by killing off the orthodox Jewish parent on the one side and the puritanical Anglo-Saxon mother on the other. Only "Sad Eyes," the old Jewish junk dealer's horse, remains as the connecting link between Lena's past and her future. The reader little cares whether the happy ending be realistic or whether it begs the question—for throughout there breathes tolerance, the finding of something good in the worst of us, which is the makeup of the true brotherhood of man. And all this so enchantingly put to music that one wonders what on earth Jews, Catholics and Protestants have been squabbling about thro' the centuries.

"They look at stars and call them, Denominational."

The book presents such excellent material for dramatization that one hopes Mr. Paul will extend his opportunity for enriching the hearts of a larger audience.

H. Jay Cobbs

## GARGOYLES

## A Devastating Novel

By Chicago's Own

BEN HECHT

"A book of grinning images that look down from the Notre Dames of Chicago."—John Phillip Morris