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by

Charles A. Lindbergh

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The first two volumes of the new "Murray Hill Biography Series", published by the George H. Doran Company, appeared July 15. They are "Life of Upton Sinclair", by Floyd Dell, and "Life of Hawthorne", by Herbert Gorman. Two other volumes, "Emerson", by Robert M. Gay, and "Robert Frost", by Gorham Munson, will appear later in the Fall.

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Bromfield's "Good Woman" Brilliant, Clever, Complete

The fourth and final panel of "Escape," by Louis Bromfield has arrived with a title too broadly sarcastic to be as ironic as Mr. Bromfield intended it to be. "A Good Woman" is better than "Early Autumn," Mr. Bromfield's Pulitzer prize winning novel, and not so excellent as "The Green Bay Tree." I did not have the opportunity of reading "Possessions" and so cannot compare it with this final volume.

To close this series of books which comprise a very clear and vivid picture of the trend of various phases of modern America, Mr. Bromfield has elected to place the scene of his narrative in the "bible belt" of the Middle West. He has chosen as a central figure one of those "good" women who succeed in making virtue odious, who rationalize their desires in terms of the Almighty, and who are most dangerous in that they succeed in believing their own lies. As a living example of despicable self-righteousness this Emma Downes is what the over-advertised Elmer Gantry might have been, had he been placed in the hands of a writer who considered character delineation more important than sure-fire selling methods. The only thing that keeps her from being a great character is Mr. Bromfield's lack of greatness; that understanding that is necessary to see a character as a whole. He sees the effect, but not the cause.

The minor characters are the strongest claim that the book can lay to greatness. They win your sympathy and lose it with the same bewildering frequency that you encounter with people whom you know intimately in your every day life. There is a sense that the characters are greater than their creator, for even the biting sarcasm of Mr. Bromfield's drawing of the flat voiced, shallow little missionary, Naomi, cannot destroy the reader's pang of pity for her complete futility.

These secondary characters of the book are so well balanced that they become the living characters of the story and this fact leads the reader to believe that Mr. Bromfield is able to see much more clearly with a telescope than with a magnifying glass, and that while Mr. Bromfield's book is clever, it is brilliant and it is complete—life isn't.

B. B.

Pot Shots at Pot Boilers

WE notice that our own inspired make-up man put the B. B. shot in the middle of the column, last week. Our personal opinion is that he feels that nobody ever reads as far as the bottom and, in a burst of kindness, he put our initials where there was a chance of somebody seeing them.

THE generally accepted fact that great minds find their deepest relaxation in mystery stories, combined with our aversion to these Nick Carter affairs have always kept some slight tang of recognized inferiority to a mentality we might otherwise overrate to a disgusting extent. However we have found two recent books wherein the crime-solvers were not so insufferably superior. One, "Sinners Go Secretly," by the mysterious Anthony Wynne, is a series of twelve mysteries done in the tabloid manner, retaining the best points of a longer novel without the excelsior padding of extraneous false clues. The second, "Terror Keep," by Edgar Wallace, endeared itself to us through the fact that the master mind of the volume loved so deeply that he became human enough to shave off his side whiskers. Lovely!

MARCEL PREVOST has written a book that stands as a shining light against the dull background of the average summer publication. Perhaps we would not have been so greatly impressed if the volume had appeared in the Autumn but we like to feel that we are discerning under any circumstances and not subject to the effect of relativity. (All of which gradiose phrasing is but a poor camouflage for the fact that we are not so sure of ourselves this time.) "His Mistress and I" is written in the first person singular, as a story to be submitted to a professor of psychology and as such, contains practically no plot or action. But as a subtle analysis of the modus operandi of three sensitive people who understand their weaknesses and their strength, it is an amazing volume. The book contains none of the traditional Gallic lightness but all that is best of Gallic insight into the soul of this losing race of ours. To the best of our knowledge, no one has ever defined, so clearly and concisely the fact that once a perfect love loses the smallest mite of its faith, it can only be regained in perfection through renunciation. Sophie was thrice wise when she said, "I love you . . . because I'm leaving you," and left. B. B.

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